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Educational Quality Improvement Program
Classrooms • Schools • Communities

Reaching and Educating At Risk Children (REACH India)

For the period of October 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005



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With:

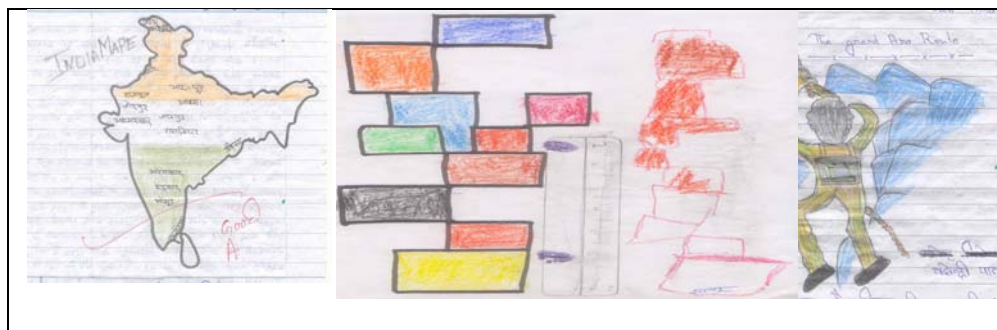
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Table of Contents



I. Executive summary.....3

II. Key accomplishments.....4

III. Programming activities.....6

1. Project implementation.....6

1.1 REACH India partner NGO activities

1.2 REACH India components

- A. Educational quality**
- B. Dissemination and networking**
- C. Monitoring and evaluation**
- D. Finance and administration**
- E. Organizational development**
- F. Action research**

2. Project rollout.....42

IV. Future steps.....49

Annexure 1: List of acronyms

I. Executive summary

It has been 18 months since the program began and our vision of supporting NGOs in India to attract and retain vulnerable children in school is becoming reality. We are now shifting gears: moving from being primarily engaged with grant decision making to becoming more and more involved with supporting and monitoring the progress of our partner NGOs.

While some of our grantees are engaged in start-up activities – setting up office, recruiting and training staff, buying/leasing equipment etc – quite a few partner NGOs have gone beyond that: identifying students and locations for schools, mobilizing the community, initiating baseline surveys, drafting work plans and monitoring frameworks, engaging with government officials and most important of all, launching their educational programs – bridge programs, remedial support, residential camps etc.

Indeed, as the project staff look at the reports from our 16 partner NGOs, we feel proud and privileged to be associated with organizations that bring such diverse and complementary strengths to the program and form a powerful resource group. Our 16 partners (10 Direct Service grantees and six Capacity Building grantees) collectively impact more than 140,000 children in the three geographical areas.

The Capacity Building grantees have proposed working with 42 sub-grantees; of these, six sub-grantees have received approval.

Undoubtedly, our biggest achievement as we look back on the last six months, has been the maturing of the REACH India network from a sapling to a full-grown tree with 16 branches -- so far. We started with seven partners in Delhi, added on four more in Jharkhand and then, a further five in Kolkata.

With partners in place, the project's assistance initiatives to ensure a smooth implementation for our partners have picked up pace. Training workshops in performance monitoring, financial management and dissemination planning have been held. Partners have provided input towards enhancing our educational quality checklists and baseline survey templates. They have been introduced to the concepts of organizational development and action research, two components that will take off more fully in the second half of Year 2. We have developed assessment tools in the various areas, and information from these will guide our Technical Assistance (TA) activities during the project period. Partner NGOs have begun implementing their programs, and some have already sent us their monitoring and dissemination plans, and financial quarterly reports.

While TA forms the main focus of the current reporting period, we are still in the process of expanding the network; the Chhattisgarh grant recommendations packet is being prepared and will be sent to USAID for approval in May. We will hold the introductory and TA workshops in

Mumbai in April. The rollout initiative has begun in Karnataka, and we hope to hold the introductory and TA workshop in the next few months.

The project staff has been interacting with government agencies in all the target geographical areas to ensure that we understand the official perspective and pave the way for our NGOs to work with the government channels so that REACH India truly supports and complements SSA. This has been easier said than done in some areas, and we continue to negotiate these turbulent waters with mixed results. Our first Advisory Board meeting saw substantial discussion around this issue, and we received some insightful guidance from the members.

Project background: The aim of the Reaching and Educating At-risk Children (REACH) in India project is to attract and retain disadvantaged children in quality educational programs by strengthening the capacity of Indian NGOs¹ in selected urban and rural areas. The project complements the Government of India's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) or Universal Elementary Education (UEE) program.

The first facet of the implementation approach is to improve service delivery of a core group of NGOs while the second facet supports the efforts of established NGOs to build the capacity of smaller and less experienced NGOs to provide basic education services to vulnerable children.

The project will provide grants (totaling US \$11.2 million over the project period i.e., 2003-2007) and technical assistance to NGOs that provide educational services to address the basic education needs of at-risk children -- defined for this purpose as children (especially girls), between the ages of four and 14 years of age, who are either out of school or are in school but in danger of dropping out.

II. Key accomplishments

Below we highlight some of the major achievements during the reporting period.

1. Grants have been disbursed to three areas – Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata – and we now have 16 partner NGOs in the network with project implementation accelerating in the last few months.
2. REACH India's partner NGOs (10 Direct Service grantees and six Capacity Building grantees) have launched their projects, and are at various phases in implementation: from setting up office, recruiting staff, identifying and selecting sub-grantees to finalizing centers for educational programs, liaising with government and community, and getting out-of-school children into school.

¹ The term NGO also includes not-for-profit organizations and foundations.

3. Rollout to five of the six geographical areas has been completed. The Chhattisgarh grant recommendations packet for USAID is in the process of being prepared. Proposals will soon be received from the Mumbai grantees. The Karnataka rollout process has also been initiated.
4. REACH India's TA efforts have picked up pace and have been geared toward supporting partner NGOs' implementation of their projects. TA on project formulation begins as early as during the rollout process, when all potential grantees are provided guidance and assistance to prepare their project proposals. However, once the grantees come on board, the nature of the assistance changes and gets less general and more focused. Technical assistance was provided to NGOs in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata on financial management systems, preparation of their monitoring and evaluation plans, guidance on dissemination planning, discussion on education quality etc.
5. The Advisory Board was constituted and met for the first time in February to provide guidance for implementing the program. Several issues were addressed by members of the group. Some highlights that emerged from the day-long meeting were: the importance of recording cumulative change; the necessity of monitoring and evaluation to focus on processes, and not numbers; learning during the granting process; meaningful mainstreaming; system strengthening; defining NGO roles that complement the government; suggestions on different ways of delivering TA; and guidance on networking and dissemination.
6. The REACH India dissemination plan was approved by USAID. All the dissemination activities as detailed in the respective NGO dissemination matrices will be incorporated into this plan so that a master matrix can be created, reviewed and adjusted as needed.
7. The REACH India Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) was approved by USAID. Months of intensive work went into preparing the plan. The approval has now made it possible for the REACH India M&E staff to realistically discuss targets and related activities with the NGO partners and potential partners in the areas where the grants have not been given out yet.
8. The REACH India website was launched during this reporting period. It has links to the EQUIP 1 site as well as to various other educational sites which would be of interest to the NGO partners as well as to the elementary education community; and to the sites of the NGO partners. A desk calendar was made and distributed as part of REACH India dissemination activity. The calendar is dedicated to the girl child and provides some information and facts related to education for the girl child. A bi-monthly e-newsletter to partner NGOs focusing on project updates and sharing of resources such as tools and publications was also sent out.

III. Programming activities

1. Project implementation

The progression of this project can be divided into three stages: 1. initial phase of rollout and grant decision making; 2. a transitional phase where project implementation and rollout/grant decision making are entwined; and 3. the final phase where all partners are in full-fledged implementation mode and receiving project-facilitated TA to support implementation.

We are currently in the transitional phase; during the first year, much of our work focused on laying the foundation for implementation of the project. As we moved into the second year, we had to straddle dual responsibilities: 1.) Rolling out the project in two out of the three remaining regions and 2.) Supporting selected partner NGOs in implementing programs.

We now have 16 partner NGOs spread across three geographical regions and six approved sub-grantees in Delhi. It is their achievements that make up the biggest contribution to our project implementation. Most of the NGOs were still in start-up mode during the reporting period since the first round of grants was disbursed only in October 2004. However, it is evident from some NGO reports that they understand the enormous amount of work that needs to be delivered in three years, and have taken the initiative to accelerate the implementation pace.

The Capacity Building grantees are using the REACH India model in the sub-granting process including identifying sub-grantees using a transparent and objective process, using REACH India-based templates for crafting criteria, pre-grant and grant applications, and grant agreements, and holding workshops to assist potential sub-grantees in proposal development.

The project has also provided Capacity Building partners with a set of guidelines for the sub-granting process.

We describe project TA activities in the section following partner NGO activities. Much of the assistance revolved around enabling partners to set up operations and commence implementation of educational activities smoothly.

1.1. Partner NGO activities

Below, we reproduce highlights of activities from our partner NGOs. The project is delighted at the pace at which some have moved ahead, and are optimistic that by end of Year Two, we will be able to see all our current partners fully engaged in implementing their programs i.e., getting out-of-school children into quality educational programs, transitioning them into school and

supporting the formal school system in enhancing school quality and that way, enabling greater retention of vulnerable children.

We have 16 approved grantee NGOs across three geographical areas.

PARTNER NGOS AT A GLANCE

| Delhi | Jharkhand | Kolkata |
|--|--|--|
| Direct Service: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AADI 2. CEMD 3. Disha 4. Katha 5. SARD | Direct Service: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Badlao Foundation 2. Banvasi Vikas Ashram 3. CWD | Direct Service: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IPER 2. Manovikas Kendra |
| Capacity Building: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Deepalaya 7. Prayas | Capacity Building: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. NBJK | Capacity Building: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. CINI Asha 4. CLPOA 5. Vikramshila |

Delhi

All the seven recommended NGOs in Delhi were chosen not only for their superior projects and organizational work, but also for reasons of complementarity. For example, AADI was selected for its focus on inclusive education, Disha on its work with the Mayapuri slum children and children of sex workers, CEMD and SARD on their work with the government system, and Katha on its pedagogy and outreach to street children. By doing this, REACH India was able to cover all three IRs. Besides this, the expectation was that these NGOs would support each other through their core competencies.

REACH India was also invited to become a member on the Executive Committee of the SSA in Delhi. The invitation was extended by the former director of the UEE mission, who shared the REACH India belief that closer co-ordination between REACH India and the UEE Mission will help in synergy and avoid duplication of effort.

Our partners have completed six months of the grant cycle, and judging from the capsule reports, a lot has been achieved. We have our first set of approved sub-grantee NGOs courtesy our Capacity Building partner, Deepalaya. The proposals of the six sub-grantees of the other

Capacity Building partner, Prayas, are currently being reviewed, and approval is expected to be given shortly.

AADI, Disha, Katha and SARD have begun their community outreach interventions. AADI is transitioning its school (earlier only for disabled children) into an inclusive education institution and will open its doors to non-disabled children in April.

CEMD was appointed as project consultants to the Universal Elementary Education (UEE) Mission in Delhi to work with the UEE Cell and Mission Director to support project management in implementing the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for three years starting from 1 October 2004 to 30 September 2007. Under this assignment, through the REACH India program, CEMD will also build capacities of the teachers and district and school administrators in one district in Delhi to demonstrate institutionalization of reforms and create a replicable model. CEMD has also done a commendable job of reaching out to partners in the network for inputs. They involved AADI and Prayas during the UEE Mission's Perspective Planning meetings.

Apart from initiating their educational interventions, SARD and Disha have been engaged in community awareness programs with the latter using puppet shows to effectively communicate the value of education for the girl child; SARD is also planning a bilingual newsletter. Katha conducted a workshop on "Educating the Imagination" which showcased, through experts in the field, the multiple careers available to young adults including IT, book binding, Madhubani painting and journalism.

The grant agreement workshop was held in October with seven partner NGOs. A second workshop was held to discuss dissemination, organizational development and finance. In other target regions, the dissemination planning and introduction to organizational development was rolled into the grant agreement workshop so that partner NGOs could begin charting out their action plans in these areas.

A. Action for Ability Development and Inclusion (AADI)

[Direct Service grantee]

a. Project summary: The program proposed for REACH India focuses on providing inclusive education via five government demonstration schools in Delhi as well as transforming the AADI school into one that serves both disabled and non-disabled children. The project aims to reach 4400 children directly. Other activities include community-based educational services for out-of-school children with disabilities and action research.

b. Key accomplishments

- Recruited staff for demo schools, alternative education centers and action research.
- Created training calendar and began capacity building exercises with staff including exposure visits to agencies such as Bodh Shiksha Samiti in Jaipur.
- Established links with UEE mission (Delhi government).
- Launched dissemination activities related to inclusive education with street plays and distribution of pamphlets.
- Prepared tools for the baseline survey within the schools.
- Drafted curriculum and purchased new TLMs.
- Converted formats such as progress report and AADI school rules and regulations into Hindi.

c. Project update highlights

Mainstream demonstration school: Orientation of the staff included familiarization with the project proposal, strategic planning, a field trip to Bodh and visits and interactions with Pratham sites in Delhi, the Navyug School, and the Rural Community Based Rehabilitation Program of AADI in Haryana.

These visits and interactions widened the understanding of the structure of government schools. Following this, a needs analysis was done from which areas for capacity building emerged.

AADI school: Twenty one children with various disabilities joined classes in October 2004. Assessments were done for each child in all areas (physical, cognitive, and communication); and case discussions with the team and family were held to list relevant individual goals for each child. Admissions for non-disabled children is in progress for the session beginning April 2005.

Alternative educational services: In the period beginning October 2004, 38 out-of-school children (nine girls and 29 boys) with disabilities accessed these community-based services. More than 100 individual sessions were organized. An innovative strategy to enhance quality of service delivery has emerged in the form of group sessions. A data analysis showed that the South zone and Najafgarh had the maximum density of out-of-school children with disability, and so, it was decided to start a cluster in the south zone.

Research and documentation: The two main components to be researched are the transformation of a special school into an inclusive school and the changes occurring in the government schools due to the intervention. The research design is waiting for inputs by educational researchers, and will subsequently be finalized. The tools for the baseline survey within the schools are in the process of being finalized. Work will begin as soon as the five government schools are finalized.

Establishing linkages with UEE mission of Government of Delhi: AADI was invited to the State Perspective Planning meeting by CEMD. The project director later on gave written inputs for the plan, which were incorporated in the draft plan.

Internal capacity building: The orientation visit and interactions with the Bodh Shiksha Samiti, Rajasthan, helped AADI build an in-depth understanding of the joys and challenges of working with the government schools. Bodh's passion and focus was contagious and the team returned from Jaipur optimistic and hopeful of making a vast difference to the mainstream demonstration schools especially to the girls and differently-abled students. The main learning outcomes of these visits and interactions are:

- Working in collaboration with the Government will require a lot of patience.
- Perseverance and compassionate tolerance to different working styles are the keys for achieving breakthroughs.
- Celebrate the breakthroughs however small.
- Being thoroughly competent in pedagogy and teaching-learning methodologies reinforces the efforts to intervene.
- Working with and through the neighborhood and community brings more responsibility and accountability to schools.

Training needs were consolidated and some systems put in place especially the training calendar, reading circle and the circle time. The purpose of the reading circle is to read and present the various educational reports, articles and policies with particular emphasis on understanding the policy-practice gap that exists (if any) and analyze why they may be there.

d. Challenges: The delay in getting the official letter from the Delhi government about the demonstration schools is impeding AADI's action plan progress.

e. Future steps: The activities on the agenda for the next six months are:

- Workshop with government school principals.
 - MOU may evolve with the schools involved.
 - Needs assessment of each school with emerging plans.
- School(s) survey
 - Surveying the community to find the number of out-of-school children.
 - Mobilizing the neighborhood.
- Mapping the processes of the two schools for this year.
 - Using the checklist to identify the baseline of the schools.
- Mobilizing the community and engaging in a dialogue with them
 - Identifying the resources in the community.
 - Organizing street plays to highlight the significance of going to schools.
- Coming to a consensus on the priority areas that the schools need to focus on to enhance the quality in the school.

- Creating an intervention model.
 - Identifying the key areas of intervention.
 - Evolving a model for intervention.
- Initiating the intervention.
- Identification and finalization of community resources and setting up of clusters.
- Conduct baseline survey for the catchment areas of the two alternative education sites.
- Finalize the design and conduct the research survey.

B. Center for Education Management and Development (CEMD)

[Direct Service grantee]

a. Project summary: The project proposed for REACH India will be undertaken in partnership with the Department of Education and UEE Mission of the Delhi State Government, and involves working to improve the quality of education provided in the formal school system in one district, Southwest A, as well as enhancing achievement capacity of the UEE cell by expanding its "management bandwidth." The project will impact 16,560 children.

b. Key accomplishments

- Assisted UEE cell and Mission Director with the planning, implementation and monitoring requirements of the UEE program.
- Helped develop UEE annual report.
- Provided support in development of the Delhi UEE Mission's Perspective Plan (2004–2010) and manpower planning.
- Held workshops for district planning.
- Participated in networks such as the Academic Support Group, a think tank for development of strategies to improve teaching-learning in Delhi Government Schools.
- Refined Foundation Course curriculum.
- Completed baseline survey for state-level intervention.

c. Project update highlights

The first meeting with the Mission Director led to an invitation to join as project consultants immediately, since several project management requirements had not been fulfilled and the existing UEE Branch team did not have the capacity to undertake them. A series of tasks was assigned, to be completed within a month: Annual Report, Perspective Plan, manpower plan, recruitment and selection, and ensuring entry of District Information System for Education (DISE) 2003 data. The CEMD team was told that upon completion of these assignments on a war-footing, consultative processes could be undertaken at all levels as per SSA requirements.

A letter was issued by the Mission Director appointing CEMD as project consultants under the REACH India program to the UEE Mission for the duration of 3 years.

Findings from a preliminary needs analysis of the UEE Mission indicated that the capacity of the UEE branch for project management was far lower than had been expected, in terms of staff strength, staff deployment, awareness of SSA goals and management competencies.

Almost all UEE staff being in diverted capacity or holding dual responsibilities was identified as the primary cause of low motivation and severely low capacity at state and district levels. A draft document for recruitment and selection of a permanent UEE Project team was developed and handed to the UEE Branch, which tabled it at the Executive Committee Meeting, where it was accepted.

CEMD has started the process of networking with NGOs to identify areas of commonality, synergy and learning. Visits were made to Prayas and Katha to understand their interventions. Both AADI and Prayas were invited to participate in workshops for development of the Perspective Plan and the district plan. Special focus group NGOs including AADI, Butterflies, CASP-Plan and SARD were invited to workshops on the district annual plans.

d. Challenges

Data gaps have proved to be the greatest obstacle to planning and monitoring of SSA in Delhi. DISE 2003 data was initially not available, and when available turned out to be incomplete and unusable. DISE 2004 data also appeared to be flawed and incomplete. District level data and disaggregated data was not available, so the Perspective Plan and district plans are based on very limited data. Lack of time-series data has made it impossible to calculate retention, transition and completion rates.

Change of the Education Director has caused a setback to UEE project management, which was proceeding very well. The manpower plan was put on hold and resulted in skeletal district planning teams, placing an unforeseen burden on the UEE Branch as well as the CEMD team.

e. Future steps

- Intensive support will be provided to the UEE branch and district cells to complete district and state-level Annual Plans and Budgets for 2005-06. Thereafter, special attention will be given to decentralizing data gathering and data entry processes to district level to ensure accuracy and completeness of data, which are essential to planning meaningfully for UEE goals.
- The baseline survey will be conducted for the district intervention.
- Baseline reports will be developed for state and district-level interventions.
- The Education Management Course for district officials and Heads of School of Southwest A will be conducted in June.

- The teacher training for the Foundation Course in Hindi and Math will be delivered in three parts to teachers of District Southwest A, beginning in April. Network meetings will be held monthly to provide support for implementation of learnings.
- Curriculum development for the Advanced Course in Education Reform will be initiated.

C. Disha

[Direct Service grantee]

a. Project summary: Disha proposes to work with 3500 vulnerable children i.e., street children, working children and children of sex workers, in six slum clusters of the Mayapuri industrial area (Phase II) in Southwest Delhi. Activities include developing need-based strategies like alternative education centers, bridge courses, transit classes, remedial classes and camp schools for vulnerable children for access, retention, quality and linkage with the formal education system. They also plan to incorporate puppetry, storytelling, theatre, mime and photography in their pedagogy to make it relevant and innovative.

b. Key accomplishments

- Selected, recruited and oriented staff and teachers.
- Provided training in preparing contextualized TLMs and using existing materials for effective teaching.
- Set up 20 Alternative Education Centers with 864 vulnerable children.
- Set up parent-teacher committees.
- Formed a slum education and ward level committee comprising teachers, parents and community dwellers.
- Developed and displayed a puppet show to communicate the value of education for girls.
- Met with officials in various government agencies to strengthen linkages.

c. Project update highlights

Apart from pedagogical training, teachers also received training in perspective building on SSA including problem analysis and understanding the target groups, roles and functions of different functionaries under SSA, school, community, state and national level linkages, the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), teacher training interventions through distant education and project monitoring and evaluation. The resource persons for this training were from the National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

Disha also developed a puppet show based on UNICEF's "Meena Ki Kahani" on education for the girl child using rod puppets. In all, 12 puppet shows were presented in the area. Large crowds witnessed the shows and the result of the evaluation revealed that people retained the

key messages and their knowledge about the importance of educating girl children increased by 75 percent. On average, around 150 people attended each show.

d. Future steps

- To hold the parent-teacher meeting at least once in two months
- Establish three slum committees in the catchment area.
- Establish six PTAs (one per school) with 60 parents.
- Organize a mela.

D. Katha

[Direct Service grantee]

a. Project summary: Katha proposes to work in three camps in the Govindpuri slums in South Delhi and will target 12,840 vulnerable children through a spectrum of initiatives including community bridge schools, full alternative programs, library on wheels, remedial classes for formal school students and sharing of the NGO's renowned teaching materials and pedagogy with teachers in the formal schools.

b. Key accomplishments

- Recruited 10 teachers for community schools.
- Provided training in pedagogy and lesson planning.
- Completed assessment of the catchment areas.
- Began the school on wheels program at 10 street junctions.
- Began the library on wheels program in 20 clusters with story-telling sessions.
- Conducted workshop on "Educating the Imagination."
- Collaborated with other NGOs on a variety of activities.

c. Project update highlights



Kathashala main school: Starting in October, the topic chosen for the school through which all subjects are taught was The Great Arc Route and the Heretic Route. The Great Arc established a base for the mapping of the entire Indian subcontinent. The Heretic Route exposed the children to women of extraordinary courage who were passionate campaigners for social and political rights, and seekers of spiritual truth. The teaching-learning methodologies used were varied depending on the age group and the subject being taught. Art was also integrated into the curriculum. The children learned to use the Handycam and recorded the community's water problems. They also made a PowerPoint presentation to highlight the problems faced by the people and showed it to Delhi Chief Minister Ms. Sheela Dixit and members of the Delhi Jal Board. Another group of children are making a film on action taken by the Delhi Jal Board regarding this problem.

Katha community schools: An assessment of the area where the Katha community schools are being run was carried out. The population in each area was significantly different from the other. It was found that in one camp, the families were mainly Banjaras from Rajasthan; the men worked as ironmongers or laborers, the women worked as domestic help in the DDA colony next door and only 50 per cent children went to school. In another camp, the residents were migrants from UP and Rajasthan; most parents worked in the Okhla Industrial area and about 60 per cent children were going to school. In Sangam Vihar, there were migrants from Bihar and UP, mostly Muslim, with hardly any girls going to school. In Rori Bajari camp, there were migrants from Madhya Pradesh with 80 percent of the children working.

E. Society for All Round Development (SARD)

[Direct Service grantee]

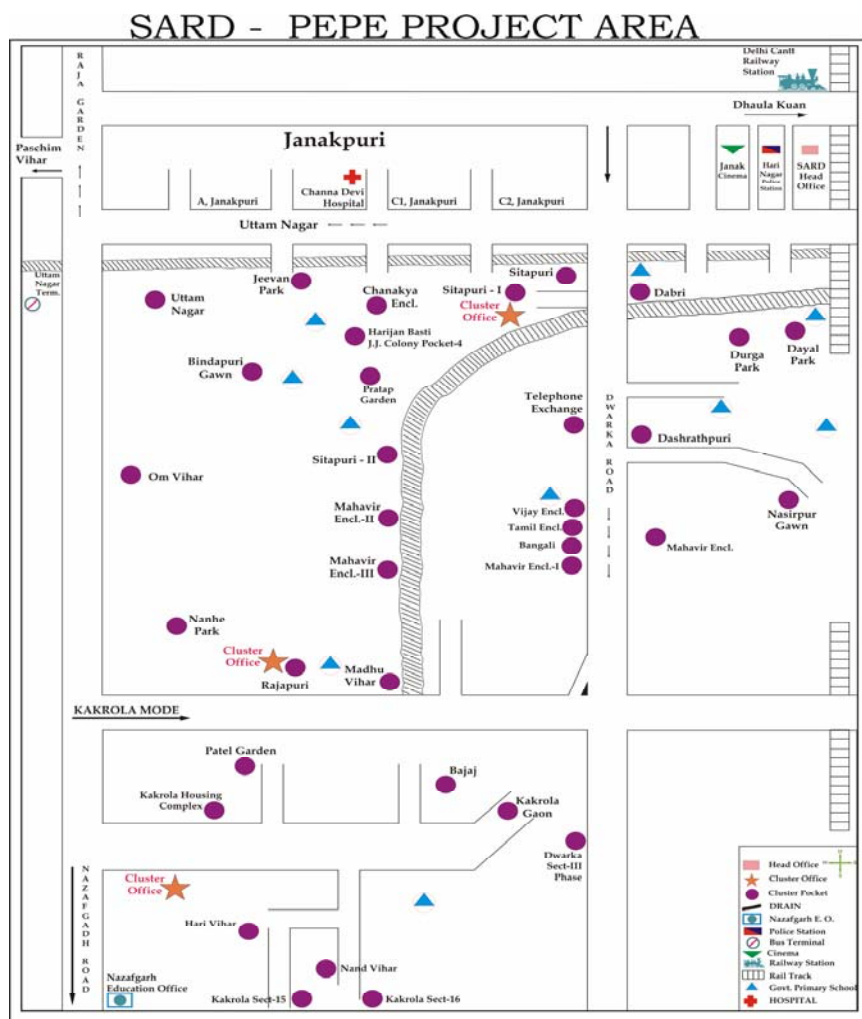
a. Project summary: The program will benefit approximately 10,200 vulnerable children aged 3-14 years who live in 30 resettlement colonies in Southwest District that fall within the Najafgarh zone of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). SARD's interventions include bridge schools, remedial classes, balwadis, training and sensitization of teachers in the formal schools in the area and community mobilization to ensure that children go to school.

b. Key accomplishments

- Recruited and oriented project staff and teachers.
- Established three cluster offices, effectively coordinating the activities of 10 colonies each in their respective clusters.
- Built ties with the Delhi UEE Mission, Municipal Corporation of Delhi and Delhi Council of Child Welfare (DCCW).
- Set up 10 quality education centers in the three target clusters. Efforts are on to start 15 more such centers which would help cover most of the vulnerable children living in the targeted areas.
- Developed teacher training kit and curriculum for centers.

- Carried out baseline survey.
- Organized initial capacity building exercises for staff including exposure visits.
- Carried out resource and area mapping.
- Documented case studies.
- Began planning for SARD newsletter which will be bilingual.
- Initiated parent-teacher committees.

c. Project update highlights



Two agencies to provide training have been identified: Bodh Shiksha Samiti and Central Institute of Education. The programme staff was introduced to the concept of Quality Education Centres (QECs) at SARD's Bharatpur program and at Bodh. The teachers were trained on how to deal with classrooms which had students of different levels and grades, and a heterogeneous group of students in terms of age, education, gender and social background.

The area map of the project was made with community participation and helped SARD in getting to know important facts such as the connectivity of the area,

resources and facilities available in the community along with the identification of landmarks. Approximately 35-40 children are coming regularly to each QEC.

To avoid duplication, a series of meetings with SSA officials was held. A list of learning centers run by various NGOs in each Kshetra was obtained for the SARD target area. Officials from the State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) and the District Institute for Education and Training (DIET) have agreed to become members of the Program Steering Committee. In relation to the selection of schools for remedial education classes, meetings with

principals of various government schools were held. In addition, Ms. Indira Yadav, Director (Education), Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), was briefed about the list of government schools where remedial classes could be started. Meetings were also held with DCCW for referral services for children with special needs.

Initiatives were taken to attain financial sustainability for the project through a special orientation meeting. A list of potential donors including corporate houses, media related resource generation etc. has been prepared.

The project staff was familiarized with the curriculum, manual and TLM development for subject areas like mathematics, language development and environment. Parent-teacher committees are being formed in all the clusters where learning centers are already functioning. Parents have started realizing the importance of education for their children as well as the role parents can play in monitoring the centers.

d. Future steps

- Finalization of research agenda and design.
- Review of text books used in MCD schools.
- Holding a camp with DCCW to address the requirements of children with special needs
- Holding a sensitization workshop for MCD officials and heads of schools in children's rights and education.

Summary of Capacity Building grantees

F. Deepalaya

[Capacity Building grantee]

a. Project summary: The project proposes to build the capacities of six NGOs to enable them to better deliver educational services to a total of 3000 disadvantaged children in North, Northwest, West and Southwest Delhi.

b. Key accomplishments

- Selected and received approval of REACH India for six sub-grantee NGOs, after due process of publicity, short-listing and site visits.
- Launched capacity building programs for sub-grantee NGOs and completed nine modules on Training of Trainers (ToT) for para teachers, whereby two to four personnel from each sub-grantee NGO have been trained to train their teachers for this program.
- Disbursed first installment of funds to all the six sub-grantees following which program implementation began.

E. Prayas

[Capacity Building grantee]

a. Project summary: Prayas proposes to work with smaller, grassroots NGOs to strengthen their organizational capacities and scale up their educational services for mainstreaming out-of-school children; through the REACH India grant it also aims to improve the quality of education in schools, and form a network for advocacy on educational issues for at-risk children. Through the sub-grantees, Prayas will target 3900 disadvantaged children.

b. Key accomplishments

- Recruited new staff.
- Identified six NGOs as potential sub-grantees based on the eligibility criteria developed, proposal review and site visits.
- Held workshop for short-listed NGOs to assist them in proposal development.
- Developed links with the UEE Mission and kept them updated about the project.

c. Project update highlights (both Prayas and Deepalaya)

While REACH India is still reviewing the proposals of Prayas' sub-grantees, Deepalaya is the first Capacity Building grantee in the REACH India network to have approved sub-grantees.

Deepalaya's six sub-grantees commenced their programs in February and are currently conducting the baseline surveys. Four of them have already set up a few learning centers with an average of 30 children each.

Deepalaya is targeting out-of-school children in North, North-West, West and South-West areas of Delhi; Prayas is working in the southern parts of the city which according to a 2003 UEE household survey has the second highest number of out-of-school children in Delhi. The survey estimated that more than 39,000 children are out of school in South district with girls comprising a little more than half of these children.

d. Future steps

Prayas

- Signing grant agreements with sub-grantees.
- Assisting sub-grantees in conducting baseline survey.
- Organizing capacity building workshops.

Deepalaya

- Organize training programs on monitoring and evaluation and documentation.
- Organize training programs for para teachers.

- Work intensively with the two sub-grantees which were given support only for the preparatory phase of 6 months, and assist them in preparing a detailed project proposal for the remaining program period subject to satisfactory assessment of their capacity to manage the program.

Jharkhand

The grant agreement meeting with the Jharkhand grantees was held in December 2004. While four out of the five NGOs recommended to USAID for grants received funds from REACH India, the fifth NGO, Prerana Bharati, will require further evaluation before REACH India can fund them. In March, it was decided that a consultant would be hired to conduct an assessment of Prerana Bharati, and her findings would be used to determine further action.

When reading the partner activities, it is clear that each of them has taken a different but organizationally consistent approach to enhancing access and retention among disadvantaged children in their respective field areas.

Two of our Direct Service partners – Banvasi Vikas Ashram (BVA) and CWD – have begun their education programs; Badlao has identified 72 locations for learning centers, and is expected to begin classes soon. Badlao has also constituted an Education Advisory Board comprising experts from various fields including child psychology, M&E and innovative learning and pedagogy development to provide guidance for the NGO's educational interventions.

The inauguration meeting of the BVA project, which focuses on a residential bridge facility for young girls, saw glowing testimonials from parents whose daughters had attended the residential bridge camp in previous years. BVA says it has already seen an improvement in the performance of its current batch of girls from their baseline evaluation test.

CWD has recruited and trained staff for its various interventions including running balwadis and strengthening the formal school system by adding a teacher to ten single-teacher schools in the district. Given the remote corners of Rania block where they are working, CWD was challenged with finding qualified teachers (they had trouble finding matriculates i.e. tenth standard pass in the area) and so, decided to train enthusiastic villagers for the job!

Our sole Capacity Building partner, NBJK, has identified its 10 sub-grantees, and sent in their proposals to REACH India. The review process is still on; through these potential sub-grantees, we will be reaching some of the most underserved districts in the state such as Giridih, Palamu and Garhwa.

The highlights of work done by the grantee NGOs in this region during the current reporting period is recorded below.

A. Badlao Foundation

[Direct Service grantee]

a. Project summary: The project aims at enrolling and retaining at-risk children, especially girls, through bridge programs and age-specific and tribe-specific interventions in the districts of Godda, Pakur, Sahebganj and Dhumka. The program also includes a supplementary teaching component in the formal schools as well as after-school coaching programs to support retention of mainstreamed children. The agency works through Mahila Sabhas which are entrusted with the task of developing the communities. The program aims to impact 2880 children.

b. Key accomplishments

- Identified 72 education centers in six blocks of four districts for starting alternative education centers namely the Bal Vatika (early childhood centers) and Lok Shikshan Kendras (education centers for children between 6-14 years).
- Recruited a coordinator, three cluster coordinators and 95 teachers for the Bal Vatikas and Lok Shikshan Kendras.
- Completed survey of at-risk children to be enrolled at these centers.
- Formed education Advisory Board for Badlao Foundation.
- Held orientation workshops for staff.
- Held Training of Teachers (ToT) workshop.

c. Project update highlights

Badlao's criteria for selection of education centers were:

- Villages/hamlets with no school.
- Places with no Anganwadi/childcare centers.
- Villages where there are at-risk children.
- Community participation and/or participation of parents/Mahila Sabha
- Villages where teachers are available for providing education in the native language of children.

Criteria were then developed for identification of at-risk children based partially on meetings with the communities. This was followed by a door-to-door survey for identification of at-risk children using the established criteria. Mahila Sabha members were instrumental in helping Badlao Foundation staff, animators and village volunteers in identifying at risk children in all the 72 identified locations where education centers are to be started. A total of 3335 children were identified including 1569 girls and 1766 boys.

A six member Education Advisory Board was constituted in order to provide a fillip to the efforts of the NGO towards imparting education to vulnerable children through innovative techniques. Members of the Board include experts from the fields of child psychology,

monitoring and evaluation, innovative learning and pedagogy development and networking and lobbying. The role of the Board was defined as providing guidance on:

- Capacity building of the project team.
- Primer development and development of learning materials.
- Providing inputs for conducting action research.

d. Challenges (specifically regarding teacher recruitment)

- Fewer applications were received from female candidates for teaching positions, and the number dropped even further when it came to taking the written test.
- Female candidates participated overwhelmingly in the cultural activity i.e., singing, acting and demonstration of teaching processes.
- There were few applications from the remoter blocks, and among the ones received, female applicants were a minority.

A father's story

"It was very difficult to send our girls to formal schools as there were no formal schools in the locality at the time. By the time the schools came, my daughter, Rukmini, was overage. Some friends suggested that we send her to the residential bridge program at Bagodar (BVA). Today, Rukmini has successfully passed class 5 in a period of one year, and she is now studying in class 6 at Bandkaro High School with her peers.

--Dharmdeo Mahto, small farmer

B. Banvasi Vikas Ashram

[Direct service grantee]

a. Project summary: Banvasi's residential bridge camp for disadvantaged girls aims to develop a successful pilot model for the schooling of at-risk children within the state of Jharkhand. The project aims to provide 300 out-of-school girls primary schooling and mainstream these girls to formal schools at upper primary levels during the project period. BVA also plans to enroll around 500 children into government schools through community mobilization initiatives.

The residential bridge camp has been structured into three 11-month academic sessions during the project period:

Key components of the project include:

- Selection of 100 out-of-school girls for every academic session.
- Primary schooling of class 1 to 5 within the academic session.
- Final evaluation and mainstreaming of successful girls into formal schools at age-appropriate levels.

b. Key accomplishments

- Selected beneficiaries and launched bridge camp.
- Constituted a multi-stakeholder taskforce.
- Organized parent-teacher meetings.
- Saw improved performance of girls from baseline evaluation test.

c. Project update highlights

The program required little new recruitment since REACH India was substituting funds of a previous donor (UNICEF). Thanks to intensive community mobilization efforts and the glowing comments by alumni of Banvasi's previous bridge programs, BVA had little problems enrolling 100 girls from the target villages into the residential bridge program.

The inaugural ceremony, held in December, was attended by the newly enrolled girls, their families as well as those who had in the past benefited from Banvasi's residential bridge program (girls and parents). Attending the event was a local political leader, teachers, district SSA representatives, local NGOs, social activists and block officials.

Children rule the world

During the month of January and February, assembly elections were scheduled in Jharkhand. To encourage girls' participation in bridge camp activities and give them an elementary idea of the democratic process, a Bal Sansad was constituted in which a cabinet of students was formed with different portfolios including a prime minister to look after the bridge camp's daily management activities.

To train the girls about the voting process, an old typewriter was pressed into service as a voting machine.

Educational level of girls at the beginning and

after: In December, a baseline test was conducted for the newly enrolled girls to measure the level of achievement among girls in language (Hindi) and numerical abilities. The performance report of girls at the initial evaluation helped assess the primary needs of girls. It was also observed during the baseline test that 50 per cent of the girls had problems with hand-eye coordination and could not write correctly.

In the first post-intervention evaluation, girls have already shown remarkable progress in numerical skills and environmental studies whereas the language progress has been slow as the girls are more accustomed to local dialects.

A task force was constituted with representatives from different sections i.e., teachers, social workers, NGO representatives, block level officials, government training institutions and District SSA officials. The task force has been involved, among other things, in helping to draw up the dissemination plan and provide inputs for improving teaching methodologies at the bridge program.

C. Center for Women's Development (CWD)

[Direct Service grantee]

a. Project summary: The project will focus on providing a good educational foundation to pre-elementary school children aged between three and six years of age through balwadis in 55 villages of Ranchi district. These children will then be mainstreamed into the formal elementary schools. The program envisages strengthening the formal school system by adding a teacher to ten single-teacher schools in the district as well as providing after-school coaching programs to enhance retention in the formal schools. The number of children to be impacted by the project is around 13,000.

b. Key accomplishments



- Selected and recruited all project staff.
- Completed most of the baseline survey.
- Selected and trained Balwadi teachers.
- Launched 27 Balwadis under the project, reaching out to 881 at-risk children. CWD has so far selected 16 villages for balwadis.

- Selected and trained teachers for 14 coaching centers.
- Identified and trained additional teachers for 10 single teacher schools.

c. Project update highlights

Wherever CWD organized meetings in villages, they received a warm welcome. A few anecdotes:

In Neersingh, a village situated in the remote Rania block, there are two roads for approaching the village. Motorbikes can negotiate the roads, but a four-wheeler cannot since the road is practically non-existent, and filled with mud and stones. When CWD went to the village for the community meeting they were touched to see that the villagers had taken the initiative to repair both the roads, smoothening the path for CWD to launch its intervention in the area.

In Jalmandi the villagers were delighted that CWD had provided them with an extra teacher in their single teacher government school. The teacher in the village government school often used to go to Ranchi for meetings, leaving the children unattended and depriving them of a

Mistaken for naxalites

Owing to the remoteness as well as the presence of naxalites, villagers in Rania warned CWD not to move round alone, especially in certain areas, as they were as yet unknown in the area. The NGO decided to work in pairs and provided identity cards for project personnel. One day while two NGO representatives were going to a village, some villagers shouted "*These are the men! These are the men!*" The police officer in the area thought that the NGO members were anti-social elements or naxalites, and stopped them. They were allowed to go only after one of the NGO members showed the police office his motorcycle license and explained who they were.

proper education. The Jalmandi School is one of the oldest in the Rania Block and used to have many children, but because of the poor teacher attendance, children were being sent to a school a few kilometers away outside the village. The villagers are happy now that their children do not have to traverse long distances to get an education.

d. Challenges

- Finding balwadi teachers in the Rania block was very difficult because no one remaining in the villages had passed matriculation. CWD resolved to counter this problem by organizing a one-month residential teacher training course in the block.
- Some villages are very isolated with the only road to these hamlets passing through dense forests. In much of Rania, there is a strong naxalite presence as a result of which teachers from outside Rania do not wish to be posted in this area. CWD solved this by appointing people from the area itself and giving them training.

D. Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK)

[Capacity Building grantee]

a. Project summary: The program will mentor and build the capacities of 10 smaller NGOs across 10 districts of Jharkhand including underserved ones such as Palamu, Garhwa and Latehar. The NGO will focus on enabling sub-grantee NGOs to improve both their administrative and organizational capabilities as well as their educational delivery. The project aims to impact approximately 15,000 children in the 10 districts (averaging around 1500 per target area.)

b. Key accomplishments

- Recruited the project staff.
- Identified sub-grantee partner NGOs.
- Conducted site visits to target areas.
- Organized an orientation workshop with sub-grantee partners.
- Developed a baseline survey format.
- Networked with government departments.

c. Project update highlights

The process of identifying sub-grantees began with a one-day workshop at NBJK's Ranchi office at the end of December 2004 which saw the participation of 14 representative NGOs from 10 target districts. Following this, site visits were made to each of these districts and the grant opportunity was presented along with the selection criteria to more than 60 NGOs in the region.

During the field visits, talks were also held with the community to understand the impact of potential NGO applicants in the area.

On the basis of the NGO project work, community feedback about the NGO and its fulfillment of the selection criteria, NBJK selected 10 sub-grantees and invited them to an orientation workshop.

The orientation workshop, held in March at NBJK's Hazaribagh headquarters, was designed to enable partner NGOs to formulate a project proposal as well as complete the budget and monitoring templates.

A baseline survey format was developed keeping in mind local requirements as well as guidelines provided by REACH India. The format will be distributed to all sub-grantee partners once REACH India approves the sub-grantee proposals.

For ensuring quality education in the targeted areas NBJK envisages providing training to the staff on effective teaching methodologies. NBJK is working on a syllabus for the bridge course centers and also developing TLMs. Plans are also afoot to lobby for improved government educational services.

NBJK met with identified sub-grantee NGOs to assist them in proposal development as well as ensure that they understood the project requirements. Apart from NGOs, regular contact was maintained with the state SSA office in Ranchi and concerned district officials.

c. Future steps

- Disburse funds to the sub-grantees after signing MoU (following grant approval).
- Organize capacity building workshop on development of M&E template, budget and financial management.

Kolkata

Project implementation in Kolkata began in January 2005 when the first installment of the grants was disbursed to five Kolkata partner NGOs.

The project has three Capacity Building grantees (CINI Asha, CLPoA and Vikramshila) in the city and they have shown the way on how collaboration can be practiced on the ground; all three grantees jointly held a workshop to go over the pre-grant application with potential sub-grantee NGOs. CINI Asha and CLPoA also jointly hosted a workshop for potential sub-grantees where they introduced the proposal template and provided TA for proposal development.

At this pre-grant application meeting, partners decided that any potential sub-grantee organization could apply for a sub-grant only from any one of the three capacity building NGOs. This decision was taken in order to avoid duplication of efforts and more importantly, to

ensure that organizations' program strategies had a philosophical fit with the three Capacity Building NGOs. Keeping this in mind, a common pre-grant application form was developed using the REACH India pre-grant application template.

It has also been encouraging to note that partner NGOs have been networking closely with government officials and sharing their project designs and plans with the education department. The education department officials have also responded positively to the introduction of the REACH India project in Kolkata and both the state Principal Secretary (School Education) and the SSA Chairman have attended the project launch workshops of the capacity building partner organizations as well as direct service partner, Manovikas Kendra.

It is our hope that these relationships will be further nurtured and cemented as the project progresses, and that Kolkata becomes the model for NGO coalition building across the country.

Direct Service partners IPER and Manovikas have begun their baseline surveys. IPER has also decided to include children of upper primary age in their learning centers since their preliminary findings have shown that many of these children are out of school. IPER has also formed a Consultative Committee and has persuaded the West Bengal Education Secretary to chair it.

Manovikas has selected 22 government and aided schools for its interventions, and has created dissemination materials including leaflets, posters and a film on Special Learning Disabilities. They also plan to launch a quarterly newsletter that captures challenges and success stories in their work, interactions with teachers and parents and interviews with experts in the field.

Below we summarize activities of **Capacity Building partner NGOs**.

A. CINI Asha

[Capacity Building grantee]

a. Project summary: The project proposes to reach out to 30,000 vulnerable children in and out-of-school. These children would be mainstreamed and/or retained in formal schools by replicating best practices and innovative need-based strategies. The project will primarily be implemented by 10 sub-grantee NGOs whose capacities will be enhanced in organizational and programmatic areas through continuous mentoring, training, monitoring and technical support. The project will focus on primary and upper primary age groups. It will conduct a one-year pilot program with 1000 upper primary age-group children for translating lessons from the ground to the sub-grantees.

The project will be implemented in the Kolkata Municipal Corporation area and will focus on the most deprived wards and pockets of the city including slums/squatter colonies and red light areas.

b. Key accomplishments

- Recruited staff from within and outside of the organization.
- Short-listed 12 sub-grantees.
- Met with Kolkata SSA representatives for identifying schools for child tracking.
- Developed organizational appraisal template for site visits.
- Held TA workshop (jointly with CLPoA) for potential sub-grantees on proposal development.
- Planned baseline survey activities.

B. City Level Programme Of Action for Street and Working Children (CLPoA)
[Capacity Building grantee]

a. Project summary: The project will raise capacities of five sub-grantee organizations and in turn will: 1. Run 100 coaching centers to assist 2500 out-of-school children for admission into formal schools and 2. Extend after-school support to 1000 already mainstreamed children so that they remain in formal schools. The project will raise capacities of NGO personnel in the areas of project management, financial management, M&E, survey and data compilation and academic training of coaching teachers.

b. Key accomplishments

- a. Selected project staff.
- b. Screened 25 pre-grant applications and selected 10 potential sub-grantees.
- c. Conducted site visits to 10 potential sub-grantees.
- d. Held TA workshop (jointly with CINI Asha) for potential sub-grantees on proposal development.

C. Vikramshila Education Resource Society
[Capacity Building grantee]

Project summary: This Vikramshila-QUEST project will extend its quality interventions to selected middle schools to ensure completion. An alternate forward linkage from primary education i.e., the Rabindra Mukta Vidyalaya (National Open School), will also be explored in this project.

As a result of the continuous process of capacity building, the NGO-run centers will not only enroll, retain and prepare children for admission to public schools, but will also act as resource centers and model schools that exemplify 'best practices'. In addition Vikramshila will select ten government schools, where the selected five NGOs will provide school-based quality interventions with support from Vikramshila.

For their quality intervention Vikramshila will focus on three domains: a) participatory teaching-learning methods (to guarantee learning achievement); b) introduction of education technology (to bridge the digital divide) and c) Life Skills education – a holistic add-on curricular component (to bridge the gap between learning and livelihood issues).

A total number of 11,400 children will benefit directly from the program. The geographical area of intervention will be finalized after the selection of the sub-grantees is completed.

b. Key accomplishments

- Recruited project staff recruited and allocated office space.
- Short-listed nine NGOs for sub-grants.
- Screened pre-grant applicants.
- Developed appraisal tool for site visits.

c. Project update highlights of Capacity Building Grantee projects

The half-day pre-grant application workshop was organized with 48 potential sub-grantee NGOs in mid February. The overall goal and objective of REACH India and those of the specific projects were shared with the partners for transparency and dialogue. Also in attendance were the two NGOs who had been selected for the Direct Service Delivery grant in Kolkata i.e., Manovikas Kendra and IPER. The workshop was also attended by government officials representing the primary and secondary schools of Kolkata.

As an outcome of the jointly held pre-grant application workshop, CINI Asha received 14 applications, CLPOA, 25 and Vikramshila, nine. These were followed with site visits of potential sub-grantees. In order to make the site visits as objective and as transparent as possible, a form was developed to understand, among other things, the organization's structure, philosophy and program design.

The site visits were done to ensure mutual fit in two aspects: the first aspect being the fit between the project designs of the potential sub-grantee and the Capacity Building NGO, and the second to ensure a fit between the philosophies and practices of sub-grantee organizations and those of the potential sub-grantee NGO.

The site visit brought alive all those things that were already on paper, and also gave partner NGOs a chance to begin the process of needs analysis and perspective building.

Vikramshila summed up the site visits aptly saying, "the visits were an opportunity to 'make new friends' regardless of whether or not we would be able to work with each other. It gave us the chance to meet many individuals, and share their passion and experience in education. At the same time it also brought forth some organizational practices that do more harm than good. All in all, in our role as a capacity building organization, the site visits gave us the insight to know what to look for and what to avoid when we are looking to create meaningful partnerships."

d. Future steps

- After holding a TA workshop on completing the proposal template in a “realistic, effective and honest” manner, all three NGO expect to evaluate completed applications and then send in their short-listed proposals to REACH India by mid April.
- They are also hoping to organize the M&E and baseline survey assistance workshops later in April. Following the baseline survey, the three NGOs will conduct an extensive needs analysis for each partner and draw up individual capacity building plans for each sub-grantee.

D. Institute for Psychological and Educational Research (IPER)

[Direct Service grantee]

a. Project summary: The program proposed for REACH India focuses on ensuring quality management of 40 primary schools in the project areas and running 20 community-based learning centers including eight community resource centers to improve access to all vulnerable children in the project area -- 1800 students (of which 60 percent are girls) will be direct beneficiaries.

b. Key accomplishments

- Recruited project staff.
- Began conducting the baseline survey to identify out-of-school children.
- Identified around 850 out-of-school children in the preliminary screening.
- Located spaces within the communities for learning centers.
- Appointed MIS personnel and installed a child-tracking system.
- Initiated analysis of learning materials for classes I and II in vernacular languages for developing worksheets and lesson plans for the “School-on-Wheels.”
- Formed a Consultative Committee for the project with the Principal Secretary (School Education), Government of West Bengal as chairperson and Kolkata SSA Project Chairman as co-chair.

c. Project update highlights

Since no recent slum survey had been conducted by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, IPER had to rely on old data to choose target areas. They found that many original slum areas had gentrified and given way to concrete buildings. As a result, IPER is looking at including additional areas where there are newer slums.

Based on preliminary baseline survey findings which show a large number of existing and potential dropouts at the upper primary level, they have also decided to include these children in their learning centers.

d. Future steps

- Completing the baseline survey and developing a report based on findings.
- Holding a workshop to share the data with different stakeholder groups.
- Developing the MIS.
- Setting up the community learning centers and community resource centers.
- Providing capacity building training for quality management team, community teachers and government teachers.
- Development of supplementary materials (worksheets).
- Adoption of 40 government schools.

E. Manovikas Kendra: Rehabilitation & Research Institute for the Handicapped
[Direct Service grantee]

a. Project summary: The project proposed for REACH India will focus on 900 children (in 2 batches) with Specific Learning Disabilities aged between 10 and 14 years from 22 schools and help retain them in formal and alternative systems of education in the greater Kolkata area. The project activities consist of preparation of awareness materials, awareness generation, short workshops and teacher training programs. Besides the 900 direct beneficiaries, there will be residual impact on the other children in schools with the intervention.

b. Key accomplishments

- Developed survey forms for identification of schools.
- Selected 22 schools for interventions.
- Prepared initial dissemination and advocacy materials i.e., leaflets, posters on Specific Learning Disability (SLD).
- Held the first sensitization workshop.
- Finalized behavioral checklist for screening of students with SLD (in progress.)
- Completed documentary film on SLD.

c. Project update highlights

Manovikas flagged off the project with a sensitization workshop that was attended by multiple stakeholders including the state Principal Secretary (school education), SSA Project chairman and other government officials. Also invited were teachers of the schools initially surveyed and some parents of children with SLD from these schools.

The NGO is currently working on developing a holistic curriculum for imparting remedial teaching for the selected SLD children.

d. Future steps

- Completion of baseline survey.
- Holding the first phase of teacher training for about 60 selected teachers who will undertake the remedial teaching for the SLD children in the selected schools and also at the Manovikas Institute.

1.2. REACH India components

The Technical Assistance in Year One dealt mainly with proposal writing; now that NGO grantees are in place, the focus has shifted to improved delivery of educational services; training was provided to partner NGOs on performance monitoring, dissemination planning and financial management.

We also had to formulate a strategy for elasticising our lean staff to meet all the program objectives of providing need-based technical assistance; monitoring and evaluating the partner NGO activities; documenting workshops, meetings and other interactions; building ties with multiple stakeholders – Government, other NGOs, educationists, private sector etc.; forging collaborations among our partners through networks and other forums; and sharing knowledge through a variety of dissemination activities.

It is increasingly becoming clear that we will have to outsource some of the activities if we are to deliver effective and meaningful assistance to our partners. We have begun the task of identifying potential consultants and resource agencies in the various areas for assistance which will be fed into a master TA matrix.

Also, given the different levels of competencies among our NGOs, it will be a challenge to see that the assistance we provide is responsive to each NGO's needs, and is usable and substantive. We hope to resolve this by providing a gamut of support activities: ranging from one-on-one interactions (including meetings, phone calls, e-mail, directing NGOs to relevant resources etc) to workshops and exposure visits.

Building bridges: Apart from TA, we also worked on strengthening ties with government educational agencies and broader educational schemes. In this regard, visits were made to the SSA implementing agencies in Delhi, Jharkhand and Mumbai; the offices of the state Education Secretaries for Jharkhand, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh; and municipal offices in Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi. Most officials we met with welcomed the REACH India grant opportunity, but cautioned us to ensure that we were complementing SSA, and not duplicating it.

The team has also had interactions with donor agencies and NGOs outside the REACH India network including UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, Azim Premji Foundation and Pratham. REACH India team members also attended workshops organized by some of these organizations.

We have also made small inroads in reaching out to the private sector. We have had exchanges with the social development unit of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) as well as meetings with the education officials at ICICI's Social Initiative Group. The latter is working in Chhattisgarh, and we see tremendous potential for some form of partnership which we hope to explore further once grants are approved in Chhattisgarh.

A. Educational quality

As part of the first in the series of M&E technical assistance workshops in Delhi (January 2005), Jharkhand (February, 2005) and Kolkata (February 2005), a session was held on educational quality with special focus on assessment of quality of educational services in the formal schools as a result of NGO interventions².

Educational quality being a relatively new and dynamic area remains a challenging concept for organizations across all regions to deal with. Perceptions vary widely and so the session at the workshop resulted in a wide listing of definitions for the term "educational quality" ranging from good infrastructure in schools to effective teaching-learning processes, student assessment, community participation and education management. The participants' inputs at the workshops greatly enriched the educational quality checklist.

a. Site visit observations: Site visit observations have revealed varying levels of quality education interventions in the rural and urban areas. While some organizations are running excellent education programs, some need to develop better curriculum, enhance teaching-learning processes and develop better community mobilization and participation strategies. Some of the factors that are affecting education quality:

- Some interventions are targeting children from very poor and deprived backgrounds.
- Some interventions are targeting children in extremely difficult circumstances.
- The remoteness of the geographical area results in poor availability of adequate resources (both material and teachers).
- Lack of proper space for running education centers.
- Weak community participation.
- Lack of technical expertise in education within the organization in curriculum development and teaching - learning effectiveness.
- Poorly qualified teachers at the centers.

² The REACH India results framework comprises of the 3 intermediate results that follow from the three objectives of the project. IR 3 focuses on enhancing school capacity through NGO interventions. Focus on improving quality of education that will result in improved retention in the formal schools is seen as a means of enhancing school capacity.

- Impact of teacher training conducted by the organizations does not get translated effectively on the ground.
- Lack of exposure to effective educational models.

b. Assessing NGO technical capacity in education³: A draft checklist has been developed to assess the technical capacity of partner NGOs to deliver educational programs and will be administered semi-annually to monitor and assess progress in technical capacity which will include the educational programs of NGOs. The checklist will be amended as we receive feedback from partner NGOs.

The draft checklist is designed to serve two purposes: 1. To assess the needs of the technical capacity of partner NGOs in the quality of educational services delivered. 2. To assess the progressive change in the same area over the project period.

The checklist on assessment of technical capacity in education will be administered to each organization and will serve as a needs assessment tool. The data that will emerge in the areas that need improvement will form the basis for technical assistance that will be provided in these areas through workshops; exposure visits for partner NGOs to effective educational models within and outside the REACH India network; and through one-on-one basis visits to grantee NGOs.

External consultants will be used to assist REACH India in administering this checklist to all partner NGOs.

c. Assessment of educational quality in formal schools: A checklist to assess educational quality in formal schools was formed based on feedback from participants at the M&E workshops. The checklist comprises indicators under the three core areas: teaching-learning environment, teaching-learning processes and school community linkages. An assessment framework with scores assigned to the core areas has also been developed in consultation with partner NGOs.

The checklist has been distributed to partner organizations for pilot testing to assess the baseline in formal schools. The partner NGOs in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata that have interventions in formal schools either through teacher training, remedial teaching support programs and whole school development will be using this checklist to assess the improvement in the quality of education semi-annually through their interventions.

Since the issue of educational quality is perceived differently by individuals and organizations, there were numerous suggestions that came in at the three workshops in order to develop an assessment tool - some realistic and some idealistic. As a project covering both rural and urban regions and supporting a wide variety of interventions it has been a great challenge to create a

³ IR 2 also focuses on enhancing NGO capacity and enhancing organizational technical capacity in education forms a part of it.

common list that addresses all interventions. The pilot test of the checklist will provide information on how we can refine the tool as well as what amendments will need to be made to ensure it is truly representative.

B. Dissemination and networking

The REACH India dissemination plan was created with two major objectives:

- To ensure that the information disseminated helps stakeholders in reaching decisions, making changes, or taking other specific actions designed to improve the outcomes of their programs. In short, we will aim to ensure that the information disseminated is usable and can improve the project's effectiveness in reaching its goals.
- To bring stakeholders together on common platforms and create channels of communication and collaboration among them that remain long after this project has ended.

During the first 18 months of the project, efforts in this area focused largely on dissemination (as was anticipated) and less on networking. The project hopes to shift its attention to the networking component of this project in the second half of Year 2.

a. Dissemination products

i. Launched REACH India website: The website was launched in December 2004 and is intended to serve three broad purposes:

- An information resource on elementary education for vulnerable children.
- A knowledge sharing platform that showcases success stories, articles, experiences and innovations in elementary education.
- A networking platform that helps NGOs connect with each other through online forums.

The website has project summaries of each of our partner NGOs with links to their websites. These pages are dedicated to the NGO, and partners are encouraged to submit items e.g., presentations, papers, pictures, tools, formats etc that can be added to their "mini-site."

The site has an important interactive component in the form of online discussion forums. While there is little activity at this point of time, we expect that by setting some sort of ritualistic mechanism, these forums will, in time, be used by REACH India partners and other concerned citizens, especially those involved in education for disadvantaged children in India.

We have also suggested that partner NGOs designate a person within their organization to galvanize their team to participate in these forums or act as a resource/collection point.

While we will be soliciting articles, good practices and case studies from our partner NGOs, we have also collaborated with developmental news organizations such as Indiatogether.org to reproduce articles on education.

Besides serving the lofty ideal of knowledge sharing, the website is also coming into good use for pragmatic reasons: we have put the pre-grant and grant application packet online so that interested NGOs can download the materials. Materials that we have presented and/or distributed at workshops such as PowerPoint documents, concept papers and definition of terms are online.

ii. Needs assessment: A protocol was created to gather information regarding the NGO's current capabilities and practices in the areas of dissemination, advocacy, networking and action research as well as understanding the NGO's needs in this area (as expressed by them). We have so far administered this tool to some NGOs as a pilot exercise. Based on feedback, we expect to refine the tool further, and then administer it to all partner NGOs. The data, collated from the interviews, will be used to help the NGO further fine tune their dissemination plans.

iii. Dissemination planning and review: The REACH India dissemination plan was approved by USAID early this year. We have used a PowerPoint module to introduce REACH India's dissemination plan to partner NGOs as well as to provide guidance on creating their own dissemination plans.

Partner NGOs in all three geographical regions - Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata – have either submitted their completed dissemination plans or are working on it.

Given the widely varying levels of our partner NGOs with regard to dissemination capabilities and experience, we have undertaken a one-on-one approach towards reviewing their dissemination plans. Most of them seem to have understood the fundamental principles behind REACH India's dissemination plan and have incorporated activities targeted to their specific program objectives. We have until now reviewed the plans of five partner NGOs. Visits were made to these organizations to discuss their plans, and provide feedback.

The project has tried to encourage some of them to be more strategic in their planning and structure their dissemination activities in a way that positions them as thought leaders in areas where they have proven expertise. In this regard, the project has recommended that partner NGOs create a list of "in-house products and resources" using a simple format that was provided. These "assets" need not just be written documents, but also pictures, CDs, films, posters, audio tapes etc.

The project has also suggested that they think of efficiencies in materials development. For example, a puppet show could be captured on video and disseminated as tapes. The art of putting up a puppet show could be documented as a step-by-step “how-to” text and video manual.

iv. E-newsletter: We sent out the first e-newsletters to partners in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata in March. The e-newsletter will be sent out bi-monthly to share project-related news and information. The e-newsletter’s focus on project updates will complement the more education information orientation of the printed newsletter. (*See Future steps*)

We will also use the e-newsletter to send out relevant resource material. For instance, in the first dispatch, we e-mailed partners a UNESCO report on the state of education in Mumbai and Delhi, and a UNICEF report on educational quality.

v. Girl child calendar: The 2005 calendar-planner was created to serve as a broad and usable dissemination tool, and was dedicated to the girl child. The calendar-planner was intended to serve as a reminder to stakeholders to keep the needs of the girl child foremost in mind when developing and implementing educational initiatives aimed at achieving the goal of Universal Elementary Education.

We distributed the calendar to multiple stakeholders including our partner NGOs, members of our Advisory Board and Grant Selection Committee, central and state-level Education Government officials, academicians at NIEPA and NCERT, media representatives, heads of Corporate Social Responsibility divisions and donor agency heads.

b. Observations

Our site visits have been extremely useful in helping us understand how these grantee NGOs are dealing with issues related to documentation, research, networking and dissemination.

The information collected has revealed certain specific issues that are worthy of further investigation and discussion. There are two specific ways in which our NGOs can be categorized: Capacity Building versus Direct Service grants; and urban versus rural.

Capacity Building and Direct Service Grantees: The Capacity Building grantees tend to be larger, more established organizations. They have reached a stage in their development where they are ready to share that experience with other less developed NGOs. As a result, it may be a challenge to affect the methodologies and practices of Capacity Building partners. The potential for influencing the practices of relatively smaller NGOs is greater due to their smaller size and the relatively flexible nature of their administrative structure.

Rural and urban grantees: The NGOs in the city are, by and large, more media savvy, more proficient in English as a language of communication and further ahead in the incorporation of

IT in their work. In contrast, the NGOs from rural areas are constrained in their use of technology given the reality of life in small villages i.e., electricity cuts, poor Internet access etc.

While ensuring that the project does not fall prey to stereotyping or cubby-holing partner NGOs by these categorizations, this classification does provide some broad indicators that any interventions or support mechanisms that REACH India provides must be sensitive to the kinds of grants being discussed as well as the geographical location of the grantee organization.

Another thing that became clear was that the NGOs that are a part of the REACH India project have specific strengths that can be leveraged by REACH India to help the overall project. For instance, Banvasi Vikas Ashram in Jharkhand with its experience in curriculum development can offer training and support to other NGOs involved in similar activities.

C. Monitoring and evaluation

REACH India will be responsible for assisting partner NGOs to improve their ability to monitor the results of their interventions and to use the monitoring information for improving service delivery. This will be accomplished through monitoring and evaluation modules in REACH India workshops that focus on three different aspects of monitoring and evaluation: preparation of monitoring and evaluation plans; development of monitoring instruments; and analysis of data. The first will deal with development of indicators related to project goals and establishing links between indicators and means of verification, as well as the preparation of a monitoring and evaluation plan. The second will focus on developing and using data collection tools that correspond to key indicators. The third will deal with techniques to reduce data to manageable formats and to integrate and interpret data in relation to expected outcomes.

During the reporting period, a second person was hired to assist with M&E work on the project.

Major activities during the reporting period include:

a. Refinements and approval of Performance Monitoring Plan: The PMP was developed and submitted to USAID for review. A number of issues required clarification with several further drafts being exchanged. During earlier meetings with USAID, it was suggested that qualitative indicators should be included to measure the effect of teacher training on actual pedagogy, and this component was later incorporated into the PMP that was sent to USAID.

A consultant was also hired to help refine the PMP during the project period and help to work out targets for inclusion in the PMP. USAID approved the PMP with a quality component in February 2005.

b. Capacity building of NGOs: This included holding workshops as well as customized assistance in the form of one on one visits to partner NGOs.

- Workshops on the Results Framework, instrument development and data collection were conducted in Delhi (January), Jharkhand (February) and Kolkata (February). We were able to get ahead of the curve in this area. For instance, while the M&E workshop at Kolkata was scheduled for April in our annual work plan, it was completed in February.
- One to one site visits and discussions on M&E plans were held in:
 - Delhi : with SARD, CEMD, Disha, AADI, Katha
 - Jharkhand : with NBJK, Badlao Foundation, Banwasi Vikas Ashram
 - Kolkata : with CINI Asha, Vikramshila and IPER

c. Preparation of M&E tools and instruments including:

- Baseline survey checklist.
- Student tracking tool.
- Quality education checklist.
- Six monthly reporting guidelines for partners.
- Definitions of various terminologies used in the PMP.
- Coversheet for feeding quantitative data for consolidating baseline survey data.

d. Beneficiary data: An important aspect of putting in place an M&E system has been the incorporation of target estimates in the grant application. Grantee's establishment of targets is expected to help in the training process and also provide a denominator for judging progress under the grant.

Despite getting estimated target numbers from partner NGOs, it was hard to understand the type of beneficiaries being targeted i.e., what were the proportion of beneficiaries being mainstreamed as opposed to those who were receiving in-school support and related interventions such as remedial educational programs.

We remedied this during the Chhattisgarh rollout by creating a table in the grant application that asked NGOs for a breakup of beneficiaries by type of intervention.

D. Finance and administration

The financial and administrative work during the reporting period could broadly be classified into four categories:

- a. Managing the ever-growing internal financial and administrative processes, conducting month-end closings and reports generation for submission to AIR, and completing fiscal year-end procedures for tax compliance and audit.
- b. Providing financial input for grant roll-out in new regions (Kolkata and Chhattisgarh).

c. Developing and implementing TA to NGOs awarded grants in Delhi, Jharkhand, and Kolkata based on the NGO appraisals conducted during site visits.

d. Collecting and assessing the first quarterly report submissions from Delhi grantees, and submitting report summaries to AIR.

a. Managing internal financial and administrative procedures: REACH India continues to manage the monthly financial and administrative procedures as described in the Year 1 annual report.⁴ The QuickBooks accounting system is used for reporting to AIR. As QuickBooks is a USD accounting software, the accounting records were updated in Tally 6.3 accounting software in preparation for conducting the annual INR audit required for maintaining REACH India's Project Office status. REACH India will continue to maintain the accounts in both QuickBooks and Tally.

b. Grant rollout: In early October 2004, the team visited the field operations of short-listed Kolkata NGOs to appraise their financial and administrative systems. These findings were then shared with the Selection Committee. After the Selection Committee made its final recommendations, REACH India worked with the Kolkata NGOs on budget revisions and corrections, and once revisions were accepted, summary financial overviews were included in the grant recommendations packet presented to USAID for final approval. Following USAID approval in January 2005, grant agreements were prepared and the grant agreement review meeting held with the new REACH India grantees in Kolkata.

In Chhattisgarh, a PowerPoint overview and training activity was provided at the rollout workshop in December with Chhattisgarh NGOs to assist them in completing their budget templates in the grant application. The budgets of each proposal were analyzed using a review template, and that information was then used to list questions for short-listed NGOs during site visits. Detailed site reports were written in preparation of the Selection Committee meeting held in early March. Letters were prepared for the short-listed Chhattisgarh NGOs identifying areas needing budget clarification, revision, and corrections. At the end of the reporting period, Chhattisgarh proposals were still undergoing revision.

b. Developing and implementing TA to grant recipients: Based on the data collected during site appraisals, REACH India presented the plan to standardize grantees on the latest version of Tally accounting software. A standardized list of ledgers was created that replicates the budget template cost categories. A model was set up in Tally and presented to the Delhi, Jharkhand, and Kolkata grantees.

⁴ A more detailed description of these procedures was included in the 1st year annual report under Month-End Financial Procedures and Year-end.

Since the assessment was that Jharkhand grantees required more intensive assistance, a two and half day workshop was conducted for partner NGOs there on setting up the Tally accounting software with the standardized list of ledgers, customizing it for each grantee, and providing hands-on tutoring. The quarterly reporting process was also reviewed. The standardization information and training was presented at a one and half day workshop with Kolkata grantees in February.

d. Assessing the first quarterly report submissions from Delhi and Jharkhand grantees and reporting to AIR: The first quarterly financial reports were received from Delhi grantees on January 31, 2005. Based on taking the year's obligated amount and dividing it equally into four quarters, the start-up quarter for the Direct Service Delivery grants revealed an approximate expenditure burn rate of 60 percent. As the Capacity Building grantees had not yet finalized their sub-grants by that date, their start-up costs would reveal a lower burn rate if measured in the same manner. Jharkhand's first quarterly financial reports were submitted on March 31, 2005. Expenses were rolled into REACH India's financial month-end reports and submitted to AIR which will subsequently incorporate grantee expenses on their quarterly submissions to USAID.

E. Organizational development

REACH India is committed to providing TA to partner NGOs to enhance the organizational capacity of partner NGOs. After the initial needs assessment which was done informally through site visit observations, proposal review and during workshops, we felt it would be important to place an education lens over our organizational development interventions i.e., it would be most strategic to work with NGOs on better management of their educational services, and then graduate to providing a more holistic organizational development-focused initiative.

In this regard REACH India will first be assisting partner NGOs in institutional development targeted toward achieving more effective delivery of quality educational services. The first phase of organizational development interventions will focus on strengthening the organizational systems which will lead to enriching of the core curriculum and assessment procedures, and also strengthen teacher development programs so as to support program goals. As part of REACH India's organizational development initiative, NGOs will be asked to relate the workshop contents to the components of their evolving education strategy. This type of assistance will also provide insights into where NGOs are in terms of their institutional capacity. Further TA in organizational development will be provided on a one-on-one basis to NGOs in the second phase.

A draft organizational assessment tool has been prepared and will be deployed in the coming months.

In the first phase for the management of educational services, organizations will be exposed to concepts in organization culture, strategy development and management procedures and process, and how they relate to delivering better quality of interventions. Below is a brief look at the three concepts and their role in growing organizations and making them more effective in reaching educational goals.

a. Organisation culture: Practitioners are coming to realize that, despite the best-laid plans, organizational change must include not only changing structures and processes, but also the organization culture. The concept of culture is particularly important when attempting to manage organization-wide change. There is a strong role of culture and the role it plays in organizations.

b. Strategy development: To be able to deliver services in a changing and demanding environment, it is important to develop a road map or a strategy for effective delivery of quality education services. Strategy is something larger, an overall map that guides the use of many tools toward clear goals. Strategy is a direct assessment of where you are, where you want to go, and how you can get there.

c. Management procedures and processes: To achieve credibility and inspire commitment among employees, policies, procedures and practices must be consistent with the new culture. Consistency is an important factor in gaining credibility for any change program. Once a new culture is identified and the desired core values and behavior communicated to employees, it is important to simultaneously change the existing policies, procedures and practices in the workplace to align with the new culture.

F. Action research

For Delhi and Jharkhand NGOs, the concept of action research was introduced following the grant agreement. In the case of Chhattisgarh, it was decided to provide an overview to action research at the introductory workshop so that NGO applicants could incorporate this component into their proposals.

At the workshops, it was stressed that any action research for the project should be in the context of efforts to improve the quality of an organization's educational programs.

Indeed, we believe that action research has the potential to generate genuine and sustained improvements in schools. It gives educators new opportunities to reflect on and assess their teaching; explore and test new ideas, methods, and materials; assess how effective the new approaches were; share feedback with fellow team members; and make decisions about which new approaches to include in the team's curriculum, instruction, and assessment plans. Besides this the studies generated as a result of such research can increase outreach and also impact policy at various levels.

While our action research strategy is still evolving, we are fortunate to have partners who have proven expertise in the subject. A few partners have already begun plotting their research design, and will soon be entering the data collection phase. We have also heard from some partners who are keen to integrate their energies and expertise with others in the network to conceive, design and implement a research topic. We hope to use the network meetings to forge such collaborations.

2. Project rollout

The first half of Year Two saw REACH India initiate its entry into the diametrically opposite environments of Chhattisgarh and Mumbai.

The team completed the rollout process in Kolkata and began its implementation phase in the city by awarding grants to five NGOs -- two for Direct Service Delivery and three for Capacity Building.

Kolkata

Kolkata benefited from our experiences in Delhi and Jharkhand and overall, the project rollout was relatively smooth; the workshops were more interactive and the proposals better written (although they lacked the diversity of approaches displayed by Delhi).

a. REACH India team scoring: REACH India received 46 applications from 41 NGOs; 32 proposals were for Direct Service Delivery grants and 14 were for Capacity Building Support grants. The REACH India team reviewed the applications, scored each organization, and based on the scores, short-listed 11 which were sent to the Grant Selection Committee. The Grant Selection Committee reviewed the 11 proposals – eight for Direct Service Delivery grants and three for Capacity Building Support grants -- scored and ranked them in their individual capacities.

b. Site visits: Learning from our experiences in previous rounds, enough time was built in to complete all site visits prior to the Grant Selection Committee meeting. An assessment checklist was developed and used to evaluate NGO performances and organizational practises. A template was also developed for documenting site visits.

c. Grant Selection Committee meeting: Two weeks after the proposals were sent to them, the Committee returned their rankings of the 11 proposals. This was followed by a day-long meeting where the Committee members came together to discuss the proposals and present the rationale for their rankings. As in Delhi and Jharkhand, each member presented their rationale, followed by REACH India's assessment of the NGO based on the site visit. Members then decided whether to place the organization in a "funding to be considered" pool or reject it outright.

After all the proposals were discussed, a final ranking was done in which six NGOs' project proposals – four for Direct grants and three for Support grants -- were recommended for funding contingent on their agreeing to revisions requested by the Committee.

d. Revised proposals: Based on members' comments on the proposals, letters were sent to each of the six NGO finalists asking them to submit revised proposals addressing the listed questions/concerns. NGOs were given almost two weeks to return the revised proposals. Of the six NGOs that letters were sent to, five returned revised proposals, satisfactorily addressing the issues raised by the Committee.

One NGO, Sanlaap, requested REACH India for a project deferment by a few months since they currently had funding for the same project, and also wished to use the time to find other funding sources for the nutritional component in their proposed program. Sanlaap is expected to submit a revised proposal in mid 2005.

e. USAID grant recommendations packet: Apart from the proposals, the overview, the appraisal and the comments of the Selection Committee meeting on the proposals, REACH India also included in the packet a document detailing the steps in the grant evaluation process as well as a more detailed cover note that, among other things, provided context to education initiatives for disadvantaged children in Kolkata.

USAID quickly approved four of the five proposals sent to them but wanted more specifics on the educational component in CLPOA's proposal. CLPOA, one of the NGOs that had applied for a Capacity Building grant, satisfactorily responded to the queries following which approval was granted.

Chhattisgarh

a. Background: Chhattisgarh, once a part of Madhya Pradesh, is a new state, becoming an independent entity only in 2000.

CHHATTISGARH EDUCATION SCENARIO: SOME FACTS

Total number of children (6-14 years): 44,06,005
Number of children of primary school age: 35 lakh
Number of children of upper primary school age: 11 lakh
Enrolment rate: 41,02,378 (93 percent)
Number of out-of-school children: 3,03,627 (7 percent)
Drop out rate in primary school: 30 percent
Teacher's absenteeism rate: 30 percent

Chhattisgarh is a thinly populated state and due to this characteristic, access to schooling remains a big challenge. As per the SSA norms, EGS centers can be set up only if there are a

minimum of 25 children, but there are hamlets in the state which have less than 25 children and therefore, denied an EGS center. This could be seen as an opportunity for NGOs to fill in the gaps of SSA.

However, most NGOs in the state are small and few have an FCRA account. Most of the NGOs are used to handling small budgets i.e., between 3 and 4 lakh per year.

The capacity of the SCERT and the seven existing DIETs is limited and for the past year, resource agencies from outside the state such as Eklavya, Digantar and Vidya Bhawan have been building the capacities of these institutions in curriculum, pedagogy and development of textbooks.

Most of the work done by the NGOs center around community empowerment and village self government with health and education added on as components out of necessity. Very few NGOs here began with a vision for improving educational services for disadvantaged children. This is probably because the area that is now Chhattisgarh has historically been wrestling with far more basic issues like land rights, food security and livelihood and health. Education was always seen as less of a priority.

Add to this the fact that much of the state is hard to access -- 40 percent of Chhattisgarh is covered with forests -- and it is clear why delivering education in these remote parts is and will continue to be a huge challenge. The naxal movement in the state also appears to have gained ground in recent times.

b. Exploratory visits: This rather grim picture of Chhattisgarh emerged during the course of three visits to the state capital, Raipur, as well as to Bhopal, the seat of the state government in Madhya Pradesh. Below are some of the highlights from conversations with academics, government officials and NGO representatives in the two states:

- Chhattisgarh could tangibly benefit from REACH India-type interventions
- The state education department is open to new ideas, and has invited agencies such as Digantar, Prayas, Pratham, Eklavya, MV Foundation, Vidya Bhawan, Azim Premji Foundation, UNICEF – Bhopal, European Commission and ICICI Social Initiative Group to help in policy planning for elementary education as well as capacity building of state training institutions.
- Since 1994, the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) has been running in a few districts of Chhattisgarh with low female literacy rates. The structure developed by DPEP has given SSA a head start in the region.
- While the SSA annual budget is sizeable, only Rs.50 crore had been spent in the last financial year from the allocated Rs.400 crore.

- The European Commission has chosen Chhattisgarh as a partner for state development and is planning to contribute US\$ 34 million in the field of education, health and environment. The EC project will commence in 2006.

c. Strategy: Several challenging issues emerged during discussions. For example, the fact that the Chhattisgarh government is flush with SSA funds presented both an opportunity and a problem for REACH India. There was also some sensitivity detected on the part of local NGOs to "outsiders," and the lack of capacity in the area to implement education projects. The challenge was how we as a team could make these different, potentially inconsistent actions, supportive of the project.

Keeping this in mind, REACH India developed a strategy for Chhattisgarh that took into account the limited capacities of local NGOs in the state but also their sensitivities. It was decided that out of state NGOs who either had a presence in Chhattisgarh or were in the process of establishing a presence in the region would be encouraged to send in grant applications. Simultaneously, local NGOs would also be actively persuaded to send in grant applications by providing them with intensive TA on proposal writing.

The objectives behind this thinking were two-pronged: 1. Out-of-state NGOs would assist in building capacities of not only the local NGOs, but also in supporting other institutions such as the DIET, CBOs etc. 2. Local NGOs, many of who had a strong community base, would be able to provide educational services of an enhanced quality with support from REACH India and its partners in the state. REACH India would work on ensuring that local NGOs had an active say in both the content and the process of capacity-building by "outside" NGOs.

d. Introductory and Technical Assistance (TA) workshops: While it has been a challenge to adequately emphasize all aspects of this multi-faceted project within the workshop timeframe, participant feedback has been mostly positive; REACH India was complimented for providing a forum that provides a networking opportunity for NGOs – both to interact with each other and interface with officials from Government and donor agencies – as well as one that employs a "participatory" and "helpful" approach to proposal creation. At the same time, participant, staff and other critiques have led to revisions and improvements in the workshop itself as well as the grant application.

Pre-grant application were sent to 88 organizations spread across the country including Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and the existing three REACH India regions – Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata. While 46 organizations responded, 30 organizations fulfilled the eligibility criteria and were invited to the introductory cum TA workshop at Raipur.

Since a sizeable chunk of eligible NGOs were from out of the state, it was decided to hold a continuous three-day session that collapsed the introductory and TA workshop into one. This

was a departure from previous rounds where the introductory workshop was held roughly a week before the TA workshop.

Modifications were also made to the grant application template as well as the technical review form. In the proposal template, applicants were asked to provide the previous year's project beneficiary information, outline their educational philosophy and list activities related to dissemination, networking and action research. The technical review form used by REACH India staff and Grant Selection Committee members to evaluate the proposals was revised to include space for specific questions/clarifications that the Committee members wanted to ask of the applicant NGO. These questions would then be incorporated into the letter sent to the NGO (if recommended by the Committee) when REACH India requested the NGO for proposal revisions.

The introductory workshop saw state Education Secretary Dr. Alok Shukla speak on the special challenges and opportunities in Chhattisgarh. His presence was important in endorsing the government view point as well as in communicating REACH India's emphasis that NGOs and government need to work together to ensure that children were able to attend school and remain there.

The TA workshop was intensive; the small-group activities which focused on proposal development was more hands-on since participants were able to get instant feedback on their mock proposal presentations from the REACH India team and a "Selection Committee" comprising NGO participants; this enabled the group also to understand (in practice rather than theory) REACH India's expectations as a reviewer of proposals. Similar exercises were done for the monitoring and evaluation and budget components of the proposal template.

By engaging participants in a mock proposal development exercise and providing feedback, NGOs received a better understanding of the underlying themes of this project, its goals and focus and how they could shape their programs to not only fit into REACH India parameters but also enhance its capabilities to respond to EFA goals.

e. Proposal review and recommendations: In all REACH India received 24 proposals for Chhattisgarh, 16 for Direct Service Delivery and 8 for Capacity Building. The REACH India team screened the proposals, short-listed 10 Direct Service proposals and 2 Capacity Building proposals, and sent these to the Selection Committee.

As in Kolkata, the team visited the field operations of the short-listed NGOs while the Committee was reviewing the proposals. The now-established templates were used to gather data from the NGO on program, organizational and financial management practices and the visits documented on a user-friendly format.

The Committee met in early March to discuss the proposals. Based on the discussions and site visit reports, the Committee recommended seven proposals for funding. At the end of March, letters were sent to the organizations requesting revisions in their proposals.

Despite the intensive TA, the proposals of local NGOs fell short in many ways, chief among them their inability to articulate their strategies clearly and provide realistic budgets. The REACH India team decided that the only way to get revised proposals that met these requirements would be to assist the four recommended local NGOs in proposal writing. It was also decided to use an outside consultant's services to help in the proposal revision workshop to be held in April.

Mumbai

An exploratory visit was made to Mumbai which yielded some rich information about the state of SSA in the city, the NGO sector and the education scenario.

a. Background: In early 2004, the Government commissioned NGO Pratham to do a survey in Mumbai on out-of-school children. According to the survey results, approximately 77,000 children between five and 15 years of age are currently out of school in Mumbai. The Government plans to develop 'individual plans' based on needs of different target groups of children, e.g., disabled children who may need tutors to go to their homes rather than having the children coming to school. The SSA Project Director Mr. J.M. Abhyankar told REACH India during a visit that 50 percent of out-of-school children in the city were in the "most difficult zone" (Muslim girls, disabled children, street children etc) and it would be a challenge to find ways to get them into school.

Mumbai Municipal Corporation is one of the richest corporations in the country and their annual per child cost adds up to Rs. 6083, the bulk of which goes towards teacher salaries and infrastructure.

The Pratham survey covered 27 lakh households and was done over two months. According to the survey, the majority of out-of-school children are in North and Central Mumbai; 70-80 percent of these children can be found in six municipal wards of Mumbai: G North (Dharavi), E (Byculla), P North (Borivli), M (Deonar) and L (Kurla and Ghatkoper).

There are close to 1200 municipal schools in the city; of these, 1138 schools run from class 1 to 7 while 59 focus on the secondary level i.e., class 8 to 10. Most of these schools have 8 different languages of instruction. The dropout rate in the BMC schools is 50 percent from class 1 to 7 and 30 percent from class 1 to 4.

In Mumbai, since the number of schools is sufficient, access is not a reason for children being out of school. Overcrowding in schools, financial problems and failure of children in schools are cited as some of the major reasons for children not continuing in schools. The pupil/teacher ratio in most municipal schools is 1:40.

Mumbai boasts a 96 percent enrolment ratio but the dropout percentage for the 11-14 years age group is 43 percent. NGOs here say more attention needs to be paid to quality of education and retention strategies. Among the children who are not enrolled, the majority are between six and nine years of age.

Also, despite growth in the city's population, the student enrolment rate in municipal schools is falling. The municipal schools in the city currently cater to between five to six lakh students, a steep fall from the 10 lakh students enrolled a few years ago. The reason cited is that more and more poor parents prefer to send their children to private aided schools.

Many of the municipal schools in South Mumbai are being closed or rented out due to low enrolment. However, some suburban schools are highly crowded. By and large, NGOs are only called on to provide infrastructure-type support to the schools, rather than any teaching-learning input.

b. Strengths and opportunities

- The SSA funds for the last two years went back unused. Though the utilization has now begun, it is still not streamlined. The government has not tried to engage with any NGO and/or communities to think through plans for SSA implementation. There is an opportunity for REACH India to fill this gap.
- Three educational areas were identified for funding in Mumbai:
 - Innovative programs;
 - Upper primary education, including vocational education;
 - Education for special groups such as street children and child laborers.
- There appears to be a strong partnership between NGOs and the corporate sector with many companies supporting NGO initiatives in educational programs in Mumbai.
- The NGO sector in Mumbai seems to be professionally run.

c. Challenges

- It seems that SSA implementation has yet to truly take off in Mumbai. Expenditure has only begun in the last 6 months or so.
- Established NGOs do not appear to be keen in running learning centers under SSA.
- There appear to be some differences between the approaches of the SSA implementing agency in Mumbai i.e., the MMC, and the state SSA body which is providing the funding.
- There are very few NGOs that are working on quality aspects of education and on upper primary education, both areas of need in the city.
- It appears that NGO ties with the government are limited to running the learning centers and providing support towards infrastructure maintenance in the municipal schools.

- The NGO sector is not closely knit and NGOs seem to be working in isolation with little collaboration.

d. Strategy: To ensure that the strategy took into account the strengths as well as the challenges listed above, it was decided that the primary issues such as upper primary education, need for focus on educational quality, education for special groups, more synergy between the Government and the NGOs etc. would be raised as talking points for speakers during the introductory and TA workshop, and emphasized as need areas that NGO applicants could potentially address in their proposals.

e. Screening pre-grant applications: A quick look at the Mumbai pre-grant application numbers:

- Number of pre-grant applications sent: 169
- Number of responses: 49
- Number of eligible NGOs: 22
- Number of small NGOs: 8
- Number of ineligible NGOs: 19

Once the eligible NGOs had been identified, the team decided to launch the project in Mumbai in April. The low response to the grant opportunity can be attributed, to some extent, to the strong links between the private sector and NGOs in Mumbai, which has ensured adequate funding is available for developmental projects.

Karnataka

The process for rolling out the grant in Karnataka has begun. An Internet search on the socio-economic and educational profiles of the various districts in Karnataka has been done to understand the education scenario in the area. Contacts have been made with some NGOs working in Karnataka, as well as with donor agencies and the government. A preliminary list of NGOs working in Northern Karnataka on education has been compiled.

Based on data from the state as well as discussions with some NGOs, we feel more analysis may be required before we can decide whether to focus just on Northern Karnataka, or broaden our ambit to include the entire state so that we can include other districts with low literacy rates.

IV. Future steps

In the coming months, more and more NGO will come into the REACH India fold while existing NGOs will pick up their implementation pace; consequently, there will be a perceptible shift in the project staff's focus: fewer activities related to rollout, and more energy devoted to assistance for our partner NGOs to enhance their educational delivery capacities as well as improve quality of interventions.

All our existing partners will move from start-up activities to launching their educational interventions. Activities in the coming months will range from completing the baseline survey to developing TLMs, continued mobilization of the community, capacity building of government and community teachers and selection of government schools for interventions.

In order to support this process, the project staff will have to ramp up and orient its activities and assistance towards ensuring fulfillment of REACH India goals. As we look into the future, we foresee a tremendous increase in the quantity and quality of our workload. We will need to get much more systematized in our assistance approaches, find able resource agencies to help in delivering some of this TA, and work closely with partners to ensure that the support is timely, effective and relevant.

Given the increased focus on implementation, issues that were still embryonic during the rollout phase will mature, and take on a different, potentially challenging slant. One such issue could be how to impact government and encourage systemic reform even though we have no direct relationship or mandate to work with the government.

As programs targeted to getting vulnerable children into school take off, the Advisory Board cautioned that the objective should not just be enrolment and retention, but also, “learning.” They emphasized that the project should promote quality education while meeting quantitative targets.

And, perhaps, most relevant of all, how do we truly strengthen NGO’s capacity to influence, implement, interact and innovate during the short life of this project? More clarity will emerge on this after we have completed our rollout, and have all grantees in place.

1. Partner NGO activities

We summarize below the major future steps of Direct Service Grantees and Capacity Building grantees. *(For more details, see each NGO update in the Partner NGO Activities section.)*

Direct Service grantees (representative listing; not all are doing all activities):

- Complete the baseline survey and document findings.
- Set up community learning centers and community resource centers.
- Develop materials e.g., worksheets.
- Conduct capacity building of district officials, heads of schools, community and government school teachers.
- Mobilize the community, identify resources and set up clusters.
- Organize street plays to highlight the significance of going to school.

- Finalize the research design and begin the study.
- Hold network meetings among teachers to support implementation of learnings.
- Establish three slum committees in the catchment area.
- Establish parent-teacher associations.

Capacity Building grantees (representative listing; not all are doing all activities):

- Sign grant agreements with sub-grantees.
- Assist sub-grantees with their baseline surveys.
- Organize training programs on monitoring and evaluation and documentation.
- Organize training programs for teachers.

2. REACH India components

REACH India envisions a number of activities in each of the following components:

- Educational quality
- Dissemination and networking
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Financial and organizational management
- Action research

We will be creating update reports in all areas including next steps for TA.

2.1. Educational quality

A draft TA plan for improving education services has been prepared with three fundamental strategies laid out for delivering support to help improve educational services: exposure visits, workshops and one-on-one interactions.

A. Exposure visits (includes perspective building): We plan to expose project partners to a variety of programs that will help them in enhancing the quality of their educational interventions. Exposure visits would include trips to model programs run by other NGOs (both in and outside the REACH India network) as well as training programs run by resource agencies such as Bodh Shiksha Samiti in Jaipur and Rishi Valley Satellite Schools, Andhra Pradesh.

The Bodh five-day training program on effective teaching learning processes will be especially beneficial for NGO partners in rural areas. Two REACH India partners from Delhi, AADI and SARD, have already participated in separate five-day Bodh training activities in December 2004 and have found the exposure and training very beneficial and adaptable to their programs under REACH India.

The project is considering various options on grouping NGOs for the Bodh training activities so that training can be hands on, allow for plenty of small group work, and for individualizing responses to each NGO's specific concerns. The grouping plan will be explored further with partner NGOs and the resource agency.

While the intent is to begin the first round of visits in July 2005, this initiative can move forward only after reviewing the budgetary and logistical requirements.

B. Workshops: The exploratory visits, proposal reviews and site visits (for Delhi, Jharkhand, Kolkata, Chattisgarh and Mumbai) have yielded information on NGO needs as well as the fact that organizations are at vastly different competency levels. Based on this initial assessment, a needs matrix was developed and the following broad areas for TA workshops on educational quality identified:

- Technical Expertise in Education
 - Learner-centered methods
 - Enrichment of curriculum
 - Teacher-student assessment
 - Remediation for ensuring retention
 - Classroom management
- Management of educational activities
- Management of physical environment
- Community linkages
- Linkages with the formal system

A capacity building plan is underway to incorporate the above mentioned areas and scopes of work are also being developed for technical service providers (institutional as well as individual consultants from within and outside the REACH India network.) The project plans to organize serialized workshops on these topics.

C. One-on-one interactions: While there will be some assistance that will benefit all partner NGOs universally (and these will be delivered through workshops and/or exposure visits), customized support will be provided to NGOs one-on-one. The nature of assistance will vary and be based on an evaluation of their needs. Information from the technical capacity checklist will be used to analyze and document NGO needs further.

We expect to begin administering the technical capacity checklist in May for partner NGOs in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata.

REACH India's international technical partner, World Education, has played a significant part in assisting us in developing the capacity building plan for improving quality of educational services.

2.2. Dissemination and networking

A. Assist NGOs in dissemination planning: The project staff will introduce the REACH India dissemination plan to partners in Chhattisgarh and Mumbai and provide support to them in developing their own plans. The project will also, on an ongoing basis, work with existing partner NGOs to refine and monitor implementation of their respective dissemination plans.

B. Networks: The project will begin the process of establishing new or reactivate dormant networks among NGOs at the regional level to help build links between the government, NGO and corporate sectors and facilitate the building of a unified vision among the various stakeholders.

Our broad recommendations for network practices is that it promote sharing of resources, good practices, tools and help bring together a collective voice that can impact policy. We also expect our Capacity Building NGOs to build networks of sub-grantees or induct them into the larger network if geographically feasible.

Kolkata NGOs have taken the lead to organize a network meeting among partners in May. The project will organize similar meetings among partners in Delhi and Jharkhand in the coming months.

The project is also facilitating entries into existing networks. For example, we have spoken to CLPOA, which is both a state network as well as our partner, to include all Kolkata partner NGOs into its network (some of them are already members.) Similarly, we have asked the SSA nodal agency in Jharkhand, the Jharkhand Education Project Council, to include non-member partner NGOs into the State Resource Group, and they have agreed to do so.

While physical networks will be the norm, it is also hoped that partners will meet virtually via the REACH India website's discussion forum with the purpose of debating issues, sharing ideas and experiences, engaging in collective problem solving and working with one another on issues that can be stepped up to impact policy.

C. Website updates: The website will be updated on a continual basis on the grant rollout front. Contributions will also be solicited from partner NGOs so that we can expand the site's educational offerings such as NGO case studies, good educational practices, approach papers, tools and templates, model program profiles etc.

D. Create and distribute newsletters: The project will seek contributions from partner NGOs that feeds into their knowledge gap requirements and begin the process of designing, developing and publishing quarterly newsletters. We plan on releasing our first print newsletter in May. This newsletter will be sent to multiple stakeholders to engage them in issues around education as well as emphasize the good work being done by partner NGOs.

The project will also send out project updates via e-newsletters on a bi-monthly basis.

E. REACH India film: A 15 minute film has been commissioned on the project that will capture the work we are doing (and by this, we largely mean the work of our partner NGOs) within the context of educational services for vulnerable children in India. We plan to premiere this film at the REACH India national conference.

F. National conference: The agenda for the first national conference will reflect REACH India's project components, i.e., educational quality, capacity building, networks, monitoring and evaluation and action research.

The objectives of the national conference are:

1. To disseminate good practises on a variety of subjects including educational quality, training, governance, advocacy campaigns and research.
2. To bring stakeholders together on a common platform – representatives from NGOs, Government, educational/academic institutions, donor agencies, private sector – and facilitate a dialogue between the various parties.
3. To foster a multi-dimensioned understanding of the issues involved in delivering quality education to vulnerable populations.
4. To increase awareness of stakeholders to REACH India activities, and that way, enhance their interest in supporting REACH India-type initiatives.

The conference will consist of a mix of workshop-style presentations, panel discussions, speeches and demonstrations of innovative models.

The conference is seen as an opportunity to showcase the strengths of partner NGOs. There are tentative plans to have information booths for each partner NGO where they can display their work.

Attendees will include members from each partner NGO and sub-grantee; representatives from other NGOs, Government (both national and state), private sector, donor agencies, and educational/academic institutions; and members of our Advisory Board and Grant Selection Committees.

Our NGO guests will include representatives of established “education oriented” NGOs that function outside the REACH India network as well as those which focus upon related issues such as gender and children’s rights.

There will be thorough documentation of sessions, speeches, discussions and demonstrations which will then be distributed among a wider audience.

We hope to have the first conference in August.

G. Digital technology: REACH India will, with assistance from international partner Michigan State University, provide assistance on optimizing the use of digital technology. The objectives would be:

- To help NGOs and other participating groups develop their technological skills so that they can use it to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in implementing their projects, specifically in the areas of planning, implementation, and evaluation/assessment.
- To assist NGOs develop networks through the use of technology and create online forums for knowledge sharing.
- To share and build on cases of good practices (through digital video and other techniques) that can expand the knowledge gained through partner NGO projects.

2.3. Monitoring and evaluation

A. Finalization of M&E plans of grantee NGOs: The project is currently in the process of providing assistance on a one –on-one basis to grantee NGOs in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata for refining their M&E plans. The aim is to ensure that grantee plans in these three regions are finalized and in place by the end of Year Two.

B. Consolidation of baseline survey reports: The grantee NGOs of Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata have started capturing information in baseline surveys of their respective catchment areas. The project staff has developed a cover sheet to capture major findings and this template has been distributed to partner NGOs. Information from the partners’ coversheets will be consolidated to generate a comprehensive picture of the level of REACH India partners at the start of the project.

C. Consolidation of six month reporting: The first six monthly reports from NGOs are due in April 2005. Data consolidation and analysis templates will be prepared to store the information and analyze it.

D. Child tracking tool: The child tracking tool will be created and field tested with a few NGOs in Delhi and Jharkhand to get feedback from an urban and a rural setting. Based on feedback, the tool will be refined and installed on each NGO's computer. The NGOs would use this database to track all children being reached by them through the REACH India project.

E. Child tracking workshop: During the coming months, we intend to build the capacities of NGO grantees in the area of child tracking and data analysis. Child tracking has been envisaged as a very important tool for improving retention of children in the education programs as it enables NGOs to: 1. See which children are likely to be potential dropouts; 2. Understand the factors why children attend or remain absent from school; and 3. Develop corrective action to improve retention.

At present REACH India is in the process of preparing and field testing the child tracking tool. During the workshop we intend to orient our partner NGOs to the overall site map of the tool including the various types of information that would be captured as part of this tool, the different kinds of data which could be generated through this tool etc.

At this workshop, REACH India's international partner, Juarez and Associates, will be assisting us during the initial workshops. We propose to conduct these workshops in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata over the next six months.

2.4. Finance and administration

A. Organization management and tools workshop: Based on the baseline data collected from grantees during site visits, levels of management practices were found to vary widely but most were in need of strengthening. With this in mind, a second financial and administration TA workshop will be implemented during the second six months of Year Two to help grantees deal with the most immediate needs in record keeping and documentation that will ensure USAID audit readiness. Both the primary grantees as well as sub-grantees will be invited to this workshop. A CD containing soft copies of sample forms and templates will be distributed to each organization.

The workshop will introduce procedures and tools for use in key areas:

a. Labor verification and record-keeping

- Individual employee time sheets
- Labor log for employees whose time is split between REACH India and other projects
- Implementation of a uniform leave policy
- Format for requesting leave
- Accruing leave and tracking leave taken
- Payroll procedures including preparation of a payroll sheet with salary breakups and TDS deductions, and individual payroll slips showing salary breakups and TDS deductions
- Investment declaration form and Form 16

b. Procurement

- Competitive quotations and analysis
- Purchase requisition
- Purchase order
- Payment voucher and sequential numbering of hard copies and accounting entries.
- Third party source backup
- Raising of organizational invoices
- Inventory register
- Provisions for ensuring security and maintenance for equipment purchased with REACH India funds

c. Cash Management

- Income expense register and petty cash count reconciliation
- Financial tracking method for clearing cash advances
- Reconciliation of bank statements

d. Accounting procedures revisited

- Posting individual expenditure entries
- Customizing payroll ledger accounts in accounting software to show individual salary payments by employee name
- Generate reports like balance sheet, income and expenditure accounts etc. at regular intervals (monthly or quarterly)
- Filing of reports after verification and signatures by organization's management

B. Quarterly report review: A review of the quarterly reports sent by partner NGOs showed that further assistance in this area is necessary. A checklist of attachments to provide verification from the accounting system for the quarterly report will be provided at the workshop until the accounting server software is available and functioning.

C. Grant agreement template for Capacity Building grantees: This template will be distributed at the workshop to grantees for use in drawing up agreements with sub-grantees.

2.5. Organizational development

The organizational assessment tool will be finalized following partner NGO inputs. The project plans to create a consultancy matrix that will list potential organizations and individual consultants who can be tapped for different kinds of expertise. These consultants will be recruited to assist NGOs with using the tool and developing action plans for the NGOs.

2.6. Action Research

The project will be working with our international partner, Michigan State University, to finalize our action research plan.

Based on conversations with the West Bengal education secretary, the project is also exploring opportunities to collaborate with the state education department in identifying and implementing action research projects of mutual interest.

3. Project rollout

3.1. Mumbai

The process is underway and immediate steps include:

- Holding the introductory and TA workshops.
- Identifying additional members for the Mumbai Grant Selection Committee and entering into agreements with them.
- Receiving the grant applications, evaluating them, short-listing them and sending these to the Committee.
- Visiting the REACH India short-listed NGOs in Mumbai to assess NGOs' programmatic and financial/administrative capacities.
- Holding the Selection Committee meeting.
- Requesting revised proposals from NGOs recommended for funding based on comments from the Committee.

Once the revised proposals come in, REACH India will prepare the grant recommendations packet for USAID.

3.2. Karnataka

REACH India will continue the rollout process by making exploratory visits to 1) Understand the education scenario in the area; 2) Identify potential partner NGOs, screening pre-grant applications; 3) Hold the introductory and TA workshops; 4) Evaluate grant applications from eligible NGOs; 5) Organize and participate in the Grant Selection Committee meeting; 6) Request revisions of proposals from recommended NGOs based on Selection Committee comments; 7) Compile the grant recommendations packet for USAID.

4. Grant awards and management

4.1. Chhattisgarh

A workshop will be held with local Chhattisgarh NGOs to redevelop their proposals. REACH India will use the assistance of an outside consultant for this process. The modified proposals from the seven recommended NGOs will be reviewed to ensure that all concerns and queries have been satisfactorily addressed. Following the evaluation, the grant recommendations packet will be forwarded to USAID in May.

Once the Chhattisgarh grant proposals are reviewed and approved by USAID, a Grant Agreement meeting will be held in Raipur with the grant recipients. It is anticipated that this meeting will be held in early June.

Once the Grant Agreements are signed, funds will be disbursed following which the TA workshop regarding financial and administrative procedures will be conducted.

4.2. Performance report

A staggered six-month schedule will be used for the respective regions so that the bi-annual performance reports are received at different dates from different regions for review and approval.

4.3. Finance report

A staggered quarterly schedule will be used for the respective regions, so that financial reports are received at different dates from different regions for review and approval.

Annexure 1: List of acronyms used in report

1. DIET: District Institute(s) for Education and Training
2. DCCW: Delhi Council of Child Welfare
3. DDA: Delhi Development Authority
4. DISE: District Information System for Education
5. EGS: Education Guarantee Scheme
6. EQUIP: Educational Quality Improvement Program
7. FCRA: Foreign Contribution Regulation Act
8. IGNOU: Indira Gandhi National Open University
9. MCD: Municipal Corporation of Delhi
10. M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation
11. MIS: Management Information System
12. MMC: Mumbai Municipal Corporation
13. NCERT: National Council for Education Research and Training
14. PMP: Performance Monitoring Plan
15. SSA: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Indian equivalent of Education For All)
16. SCERT: State Council of Education Research and Training
17. SLD: Specific Learning Disability
18. TA: Technical Assistance
19. TLM: Teaching-Learning Material
20. ToT: Training of Teachers
21. UEE: Universal Elementary Education